風波しのぎ
Kazanami Shinogi
THE NEW GATE
ザ・ニュー・ゲート
04.蒼き古の聖地
アルファポリス

The New Gate Volume 4 – Blue Ancient of Sacred Place.

Chapter 1

Part 1.

It was the first reunion in 500 years with Shin's comrade in arms from the game era, Girard; his support character No. 3, a High Beast. In addition to the duel and the bereavement following it; a figure that was seen at Girard's funeral was Shin's support character No. 4, High Dragnil Shibaid.

Shin, who visited Falnido Beast Alliance, faced the reality of parting with his former companion.

At dawn, following the funeral held in Elden, the capital of Falnido. Shin, guided by his support character No. 1, Schnee, headed towards a certain place. On his head was his monster partner, the Element Tail, Yuzuha. In front of him was the current Beast King, Wolgang, and his daughter, Cuore.

The elf, Tiera was next to Schnee. The monster that became Tiera's partner, Kagerou, had dived into Tiera's shadow using a monster skill called [Shadow Dive].

After about 15 minutes of walking from their residence, a 2-story building came into view. It was the place where the envoys and representatives from the other countries stayed in to

witness the funeral. The reason Shin was visiting there, needless to say, was to meet Shibaid. Shin and the others went there, because they couldn't invite Shibaid to the residence.

"Come to think of it, it is Shibaid after all. Isn't his rank the same as Girard's, king?"

"No, currently he has severed connection with the royal family. However, he is famous as an adventurer with the highest rank."

According to Schnee, similar to Girard, Shibaid became the first Dragon King of the dragon imperial empire, Kilmont, but it seemed that he roamed free after the country stabilized. As a member of Kilmont's adventurer guild, and at the time when monsters overflowed from the Sacred Place, he fought together with other ordinary adventurers.

"…Is that fine? To be like that."

"It's probably fine, since the royal family also seems to agree. For Shibaid, rather than the country, he became a figure that participates as a mercenary in a guild led by Dragnil."

Apparently his banner-like implication, for having become the first king from the start until the people gained stability, was strong.

Since he didn't gather the scattered tribes like Girard did, the succession seemed to be carried out unexpectedly smoothly. As for severing the connection with the royal family, there might be an external implication.

“From the start, it seems that he declared to be king for temporary.”

“The people must have understood it well.”

“Because the second generation king, also in the vanguard together with Shibaid, was the one he severed ties with. Originally, that second king was supposed to have become the first king. But I heard that he was wounded in the final battle just before founding the country”

“So he was something like a substitute, huh?”

Shin wondered what kind of king they were to be replaced so easily, but there appeared to be some circumstances. Since Schnee didn’t know all of the intricate details that well either, he would have to hear from the person in question when they met afterward.

By the way, this time, because Shibaid was a friend of Girard, he was picked as the representative.

“Anyways, this is packed.”

Before long, the group arrived at their destination. Shin, who saw the building, was the first to speak, it was that crowded.

The people who had heard the news about Girard’s death were many, and that the amount was about to exceed the capacity of the mansion was clear to Shin. Seeing from Falnido’s side, this might have been unexpected. Incidentally, Shin recalled the state

of the funeral, and it looked like the people who had been guiding the attendees appeared quite exhausted.

There might be no more vacancies any longer to stay at the other inns. But the thought hadn't hit Shin's mind yet.

"The number of people far exceeded the numbers we had expected. The founder shared the battlefield with a lot of people, and many of them are leaders or general ranks of each country now. Though I already reduced the numbers, everyone has acting power."

The tired-looking Wolfgang spoke.

It seemed to be impossible to invite all of Girard's acquaintances. Although there seemed to be no end to people who slipped through the loophole and came over. These acting powers were certainly due to the influence from Girard, and the top management was at their wits' end.

"Nonetheless, Shibaid-dono is an exception. I had him stay at the further inner side of the second residence, since he is the representative of a long time ally, together with the envoy of Kilmont."

Apparently Shibaid received special treatment. As they advanced to the depth of the site while following Wolfgang, a building on a different level was seen. The feeling of luxury was grasped by Shin, as if to tell it was only for VIP.

When the doorbell was rung, a man past middle age, thought to be the butler, showed up. When Wolfgang stated his business, a

deep sound was made as the door opened. Was it to barricade themselves in an emergency? The door was coated with Adamantine when one looked closely.

“Then, I will call out to Shibaid-sama, everyone please wait here.”

The butler went to call Shibaid, after he guided them to reception room.

Though Shin had already perceived the presence of Shibaid, because of the call out, he decided to wait patiently.

“Please excuse me as I have a discussion with the envoys of Kilmont after this. In the future, if there is anything, please ask Cuore.”

When the butler left, Wolfgang also left, leaving Cuore behind. Now that Girard was gone, Wolfgang was the Beast King in both name and reality. He might also accompany Shin and the others depending on the occasion of the business.

“Though it’s kind of late, it’s unwise to speak to a King without the honorifics language, right?”

“At present, it won’t pose any problems when meeting Ulu, except in public. I too, speak in formal language outside the royal family.”

Schnee spoke about her manners when meeting the king on formal occasions. She seemed to understand the area well.

“…Well, it’s because before power, he looked for abilities that were superior than him.”

It didn't seem that Wolfgang had the intention to let Shin and his group use polite language in his own country, it was probably because Wolfgang was a warrior type, not a staff officer. It's also possible that one of the reasons was that he didn't interpret it as being impolite manners from Girard's master.

After a while, Shibaid showed up together with the butler.

He was a big man with a height surpassing more than 2 and a half mels, had scales like obsidian, and deep crimson eyes. Because the default appearance was a dragon in human form, a person might feel a little fear during the first meeting, Shin thought.

"Um, it's been a long time?"

"Yes, I am sincerely pleased with Master's return now. From here on, I will return under the command of Master, and become the spear who pierces through the enemies."

"…Right, come to think of it, this guy was like this…"

As soon as they met, Shin was perplexed at Shibaid who started speaking and was for some reason kneeling. In their settings, Shibaid was a very earnest person, in a different meaning from Schnee. Was it because Shibaid's main job was Holy Knight? Somehow he appeared to be pompous.

The butler, after guiding Shibaid, left immediately. Fortunately or not, such a thing was not seen.

“Well, um. As I have told this to Schnee. It’s a long-awaited reunion so there’s no need to be so formal.”

“Yes, but…”

“Shibaid, because Shin said so, it will be fine. It’s different from before.”

Schnee called out to Shibaid who hesitated to talk. Hearing Schnee, who was calling their master Shin, without any honorifics, Shibaid understood the meaning of her words: “It’s different from before.”.

However, he was not able to understand the dog ears and tail that was seen on Schnee’s head and rear.

By the way, at present, Schnee and Tiera had the appearance of beasts through the cosplay item set. Cuore, who was well-known by the people, was in disguise with Schnee’s illusion skill.

“…Hmm, I agree indeed. Then I will try to be easygoing as well. Is this okay?

“Yes, please do so.”

Shibaid stood up from his kneeling posture, looked at Shin’s face and agreed. Though Shin, as the master, didn’t change, Shibaid presented his right hand when he answered happily.

“Once again, please take care of me.”

“Yeah.”

Shin also grasped that hand. The sizes of their hands were too different, it was like an adult's and a child's.

"Well then, we can't talk while standing forever. Let's continue while drinking tea."

Shibaid prompted Shin with a terrific speed of change.

"That right…Hey, those two people there. Come over here."

"Eh!? Ah yes…"

"Yes, sir…"

Shin also called out to Tiera and Cuore who stiffened up when Shibaid knelt, and sat on a sofa.

It was a situation that seemed impossible with this world's common sense for the two people, as their thoughts were frozen. Though they got used seeing Schnee and Girard acted like that, they might be shocked because it was the first time for them to see Shibaid thoroughly showing his allegiance. From an ordinary view, Girard and Shibaid, were without a doubt, said to be heroes.

Everyone took a breather as Schnee poured tea in a prepared teapot.

"Still, it's been a long time. Though I heard the news from Schnee, you really have returned. I too, wanted to visit as soon as possible, but…"

“Many things have happened, right? As a person like Schnee and Girard, you have a considerable role corresponding to the current situation. It couldn’t be helped.”

Shin talked with Shibaid for the first time in this world. Was it due to the parting during the time in the game, as they talked like friends who met again after being unconscious for a long time. Though it was also like when he was with Girard, it was the first time and yet not the first time; It was a mysterious feeling.

“When I saw Girard’s face earlier, I guess he was quite satisfied with moving on. It’s that guy after all.”

“That guy was a warrior till the last moment. Nevertheless, I never thought that the fighting in this world was different than in the game. He invoked Shiden twice at the last moment, you know?”

“Kukaka! He did something like that, huh!? Even I would lose after that.”

The mood was about to become a little solemn, but it was not the first time for Shin when talk deviated this way. Just before the mood became strange, the topic was deliberately switched.

Shibaid also naturally participated in the talk, and the atmosphere of the place lightened. To give praise for that splendid last moment was a natural thing to do as a companion. From there, Girard’s heroic tale that even Schnee didn’t know about would be heard.

“By the way, Shin. What will you do after this?”

“Hmm? Right, for the time being, I have examined most of the materials in Falnido’s library. After doing a little bit more, I’m going to go to Kilmont and investigate the Sacred Place next. Shibaid has investigated it a little too, right?”

“Yeah, you might have heard it from Schnee, but what’s in the Sacred Place’s heart is unknown. There are numerous roaming monsters that can’t be underestimated so easily, even for skilled adventurers and advanced level knights. Besides, almost none ever come out alive. Since Kilmont must prevent large-scale invasions from the monster spawns around the Sacred Place, the help is never enough.”

“Looks like I need to directly ascertain it as soon as possible, huh? What will Shibaid do hereafter? I heard you are active around Kilmont though?”

“The Adventurers’ guild has no border. Adventurers are free to go anywhere with anyone. Of course, there are restrictions depending on the rank. I also will return to Kilmont for a moment, then I will join Shin after that. Master has returned after a long wait. I can’t sit and wait.”

Shin thought about whether it would be alright with the monsters invasion, but it seemed the preparations were done, so it wouldn’t be a problem when Shibaid left. From the start, if the frontline couldn’t be maintained without Shibaid, he wouldn’t be the carefree adventurer he is.

“It’s been a long time since we were together in a party.”

“I never thought, the day we stand shoulder to shoulder would come once again.”

“Me too. By the way, when are you going to depart? It will not take long to examine the rest of the materials, incidentally, I intend to receive requests from the guild, but…”

On this occasion, Shin confirmed the matter for the future.

“I am sorry, but we have to travel separately. Though I attended the funeral as the representative of Kilmont, in name, I am a guard for the king that acted as an envoy. I have to give them priority until they return to the country.”

“I see. Were you not able to come privately?”

“It was the travel problems. I received the report 3 days before the funeral. It was not possible to move from the capital of Kilmont to Falnido in such a short time. That’s why I became an escort with the condition that I can borrow a flying dragon, which is the country’s possession.”

Even though Shibaid was not a speed type, his AGI value exceeded 700. If he moved at full speed, even a horse would be left behind. However, it was truly because of a lack of time, that he used a little trick.

There were various problems for a country to help an individual, but Shibaid was in their favor for founding the country. Therefore, the role of guard for the envoy of the country was

given to him, and he was able to use the flying dragon under the pretext. Shibaid was also accomplished as an adventurer at SS rank, so he was the best choice for an individual as an escort.

The king in question, which was the second generation and the current Dragon King, appeared to be still active in duty. And it was arranged because the relationship between Shibaid and Girard was known. Shin thought it was a very smart thing to do.

“Indeed. Then I will join you when I arrive over there. We can communicate via Mind Chat too.”

“I will wait for you.”

“Then, we will be going… Ah that’s right, I’ll return this to you.”

Without finishing his talk, as Shin was going toward the guild, he recalled something as he took out a card sheet from his Item Box. A halberd was drawn on its surface.

“This is…”

“Indeed, this is your personal weapon [Calming Moon]. I have finished the maintenance while I was in this place. Please check it just in case.”

In response to Shin’s words, Shibaid materialized the card. The next moment, a Halberd about Shibaid’s height was grasped in his hand. The grip was twice as thick as normal, so it was ready for Shibaid’s physique. Even so, just the tip of the spear was 60 cemels in length. In addition, blades was placed to the handle was rather than an axe at the left and right of the base of blade,

and a single-edged sword looked like an oblong axe head, was also attached. It might be seen as a Trident depending on the viewpoint.

Because it was made from Chimeradite, similar to 「Crushing Moon」, the weapon's appearance shined as if the night sky was compressed in it. Part of the blade was decorated in deep, vivid green as if an emerald was inserted into it. There was a dignified presence that it seemed to pass for ceremonial use.

"Though I haven't held this in a long time, it seems to perfectly fit in my hand. It is excellent workmanship. But, if my sense is correct, I have feeling that the power from the weapon has increased."

"Oh, you realized it? In fact, it's magic control is better than Girard's item. It's because of the 50% increase to the performance, you know?"

"50%…The ability has increased even further from the current state, huh? Even though you are my master, you are scary."

The power transmitted from the current weapon to his hand was incomparable to so far, and Shibaid reflexively stopped breathing after hearing the reason. If Shibaid's memory was correct, even in its former state, it should able to break an opponent's weapon of《Mythology》medium grade 10 times. Now, it was a 50% increase. Since it was already《Ancient》grade, Shibaid felt it was beyond explanation.

By the way Tiera, who heard it, had a distant look and was like “Ah, again huh?…”. Cuore was “50?…50!?…”, exposing her surprise. Only Schnee didn’t change as usual.

Needless to say, Schnee’s 〔Blue Moon〕 and the rest of the weapons, except Shin’s 〔True Moon〕, were already finished being upgraded.

“Well, Shibaid and the others are special to me. I don’t have any intention to throw a weapon with this kind of ability into the market.”

“I am relieved to hear that. If it is the current Shin, you could make a 《Rare》 grade weapon have a similar performance to an average 《Legend》 grade weapon.”

Shibaid nodded with a relieved face. If Shin was serious, he could make dozens of rare grade weapon per day. It wouldn’t be a joke if he could open a warehouse with such numbers. Chaos would be inevitable, if a large amount of these kind of things appeared on the market. Besides, confusion might also spread. Indeed, it was not a thing to overlook and keep silent about.

“Right now, I don’t want to stand out yet.”

Though Shin wouldn’t hesitate if it was necessary, there were only disadvantages if he put the weapons on sale in large quantities, at least for the present Shin. Even if he was desperate for money, he didn’t want to make connections somewhere.

“Then, I’ll use this gratefully.”

“Yeah, then see you again.”

They bid farewell briefly, and then Shin and his group left the residence. After that, they were walking toward the Adventurer’s guild in Elden.

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There were no borders for the adventurers’ guild. Because the information was shared, there was no need to register again in another country, even if he registered in the Adventurer’s’ guild in Bayreuth. Since there was a branch office of the guild in most countries, it was rare for an adventurer to not find work.

It seemed unnatural, if looking at it from the outside, for one large army force that didn’t belong to the country to be inside the country. However, no matter how much an army consisted of knights keeping a close watch on the peace and order maintenance, they couldn’t do anything for all the monsters scattered around the borders. Also, there were troublesome formalities just to move a bunch of knights. Before the guild was established, the delay in initial responses caused the damage to spread.

Now, the knights’ job was to maintain the order in cities, fight in large-scale monster invasions and wars against another country and so on. As for adventurers, they have miscellaneous jobs; guarding caravans, small-scale monster subjugations in isolated areas where knights couldn’t correspond. Of course, when a situation that threatens the country occurs, like during the event

in the Wraith Plains, the decision to collaborate with each other was reached.

By the way, in case of war, the adventurer's' guild in the countries involved wouldn't actively participate in the battles. If an adventurer participated in the war, it was simply an individual action, as the guild wouldn't compensate for any consequences. The position of the Adventurer's' guild in the world, though not all followed the current rule, was neutral to the end.

That position was ensured by the high-ranking adventurers. Because, including Shibaid, rank A and above adventurers usually had higher fighting power than the advanced level knights. If the adventurers' guild was untactfully meddled with, the military units that controlled a city might get annihilated in the worst case.

Still, there were oddballs that changed job from knight to adventurer, when they wanted to live freely rather than keep living on the country's payroll. Hence, total war potential of the guild was sometimes bigger than a large country.

It was mostly disadvantageous, when comparing the pros and cons of a country meddling with the guild. Rumors where the Adventurers' guild took refuge in an emergency state indicated something had occurred in the past.

"Still, this is larger than in Bayreuth."

“How should I say this? It seemed like it expanded, huh?”

The first things that caught Shin’s eye when they arrived at the Elden’s Adventurers’ guild, was the size of the building. As Tiera said, beside the long sideways, the ceiling on every floor was 50 cemels higher than the one in Bayreuth. Although the two-story building was still the same. Since the appearance was similar, in a sense it looked like a photo that was enlarged.

“Because many Beasts have big builds, naturally the buildings are bigger too.”

Schnee answered the question of the two people.

“We Beasts greatly vary in physique depending on the tribes, so the ceiling and entrances are large to match the Elephant type people.”

Cuore added to Schnee’s explanation. Because it was inevitable that having a large physique could cause accidents mainly due to contact; It seemed to have been built with that in consideration.

Shin and his party opened the big door and entered the building. The interior also had no great differences to the Adventurers’ guild in Bayreuth, as the placement such as bulletin boards with requests posted and so on were almost the same.

Though a lot of people noticed when they entered, their gaze stopped at Schnee and Tiera for several seconds due to their attractiveness. Somehow, Shin felt that the glances directed at him became sharper.

“Which reminds me, wasn’t there a request that I haven’t completed yet…”

Shin suddenly recalled it, as he looked at the bulletin board for non-subjugation requests. Despite the unfulfilled request, because the last piece he found was a very expensive item, the large amount of money he earned was far more than the reward of the gathering request. (T/N: This was in LN volume 2 when he found Gem Grass, something not stated in the WN. You can read it in the manga, chapter 10.)

Shin headed toward the receptionist desk to confirm the details, because it was convenient to complete the request if he found another piece.

“Excuse me, I would like to confirm a little something.”

“Yes, how can I help you?”

The reception woman, whose featured ears reminded him of a Chihuahua, was asked about the collection request for Hillock herbs.

“I am truly sorry, about the gathering request of a repeatable kind, it has to be confirmed at the branch office where you received it.”

According to the receptionist, items in demand depended on each area, and the reward was often different, too. So they couldn’t handle this request, only the branch office where the request was received could. Since it couldn’t be helped, Shin

decided to accept a subjugation request corresponding with his current rank.

The content of the request was; Subjugate Goblins that infested the forest south of Falnido. At least 5 bodies. 50 copper coins per body are added if any more Goblins are killed than that. Proof part of subjugation is an ear.

“Is this expensive, or it is cheap?”

50 copper coins per Goblin. In his calculations, if he killed 4 of them, he could stay overnight in Bear Point Pavillion at Bayreuth from the income.

“It can be said that requests of rank D are in the easy income category. Goblins basically act in groups, so you can earn decent income if you defeat them altogether. Though there is a higher risk to a certain degree, too.”

Cuore explained it to Shin who looked doubtful at the reward. The rank that was said to be the recognition that an adventurer has finally become independent was the rank D. People whom leveled more than 100 began to appear when it comes to this rank. For such people, they could kill goblins relatively easy.

However, even for low-rank monsters like the goblins, there was a possibility of danger when they came in a group. The goblins of THE NEW GATE have levels which range between 10 to 50.

Also in the game, it was a monster that couldn’t be underestimated, though it was only goblin. Many have died, from warrior types to magician types, because the adventurers

who had their ranks rise got carried away and challenged them carelessly.

There would not be a problem if they formed a party, but encountering a group of goblins alone, even a rank D wouldn't necessarily be safe.

"Let's do this, we could go and return in a day."

Of course, Shin could kill them even if he closed his eyes, so he took the request paper to the receptionist desk without getting worked up.

"It's the subjugation of the goblins. Please show your card so I can carry out the formalities."

"Here."

"…Pardon me for being rude, but the place you registered as an adventurer, less than a month ago, is Bayreuth, is that correct?"

"Eh? Ah, yes. That's correct."

The receptionist who received the card, confirmed whether Shin was the person in question.

Though Celica didn't confirm it when he received a request for the first time, it was because the card was handed over immediately after it was created.

"Excellent. The content of this request is about the goblins subjugation that reside in the forest of southern Falnido, is there any mistake?"

“It’s fine.”

“Are you in a party? If so, please present the party member’s guild card.”

“Understood. Schnee, Tiera, please come over here.”

Shin called out to Schnee and Tiera who were behind him, he explained the situation and their card was pulled out. Since Cuore didn’t join the party, she waited at the original location.

“Here, I have confirmed it. The party name is not registered, do you want to keep it as it is?”

Though a party name was for adventurers who formed a party for a long time period, it was also used to raise the fame and strengthened the combination power of all party members.

Some of the parties were those who specialized in support rather than combat, such as scout, had a hard time to raise their achievements.

In any case, it was easy to earn fame by fighting in the frontline, but it became hard to get noticed for someone working behind the scenes. To avoid that, a party name was made.

If the name as well as the party rises, it came to the point where one could be acknowledged by simply saying that they were a member.

Though it was not a completely fair assessment yet, as long as it was not a one-man party, it was beneficial to decide a party

name. Still, it was unnecessary for the current Shin and his group.

“Ah, yes. Please keep it as it is.”

“Understood. The procedure is finished. Take care.”

“Thank you.”

Shin thanked the receptionist who corresponded politely, and left the counter.

“A person like Shin-dono, is going for goblin subjugation?”

Cuore talked to Shin who had just returned.

When Shin held the request paper for goblin subjugation in his hand, she seemed to keep silent whether there were any special reasons. However, it appeared that she had questions about the somewhat ordinary request content.

“That’s how the merits are, because my adventurer’s rank is not high. I have no choice but to keep accumulating achievements.”

No matter how strong a person was, their guild’s rank didn’t rise easily. This was because achievements and corresponding trust were demanded from the high-ranked. Even if the person was a former knight or a noble, the treatment didn’t change.

From Celica’s explanation before, even a chosen one had their first rank go from G to F, or otherwise to E.

“I’ll end it quickly. Because I want to make it to C rank at least. What will Cuore do after this?”

“May I go together too?”

“I don’t mind, but it’s goblin subjugation, you know?”

“It’s all right. For my remaining work, because I don’t know how long it takes, I’ll do it later.”

“What work?”

“It’s the investigation of the place where the duel was fought the other day. I always go to confirm whether or not the forest has restored itself after a battle is fought in Larua Grand Woods. Because the scale of the fight was quite huge this time, the damage of the forest increases too. Even though I should increase the number of people for the investigation, the monsters that appear in the Larua Grand Woods are deadly for an ordinary adventurer. So, even if the request was given out, it won’t be easily accepted. I have to go, especially because it was after the fight of Shin-dono and Girard-sama this time. When strong people fight, a plant that doesn’t naturally grow there might appear for some reason. Besides, this investigation, it is not possible to finish it before Shin-dono finishes his request and come back, so I’m going to postpone it.”

And, though many plants with a high medicinal property seem to appear, they wither after a certain period, so it was said that they don’t grow after that.

“I see…Hey, may I go together with you for that investigation too?”

“Eh? Ah, no, but it’s possible…”

Cuore had a puzzled look at Shin who suddenly offered to go together. She might have been surprised because it was work that did nothing except for looking around.

“Sorry because it’s so sudden. For once, I wanted to see the place as the person who fought there.”

It didn’t mean anything would change if he examined it. Still, because it was beyond recognition from the scenery last time, Shin wanted to look again at the place where he fought with Girard.

“I understand. What about Schnee-dono and Tiera-dono?”

“Since I don’t have business elsewhere, I will go with you two.”

Schnee decided to accompany without any hesitation.

“Um, I’ll go too. As the forest was noisy at that time, I have no idea what happened to the state of the spirits as well.”

Tiera seemed to have been wanting to go to the forest after a long time as well.

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Shin and his group left the guild and headed toward the southern gate of Elden.

After leaving the gate and advancing for a while, there was almost no people around. Since their destination place was nearby, they went on foot whilst almost everyone else traveled by wagon. Because very few passerby also moved along the highway, it was a different direction from Shin and his party who were going to the forest.

“Over here.”

Shin changed the directions, as he perceived a monster’s sign. They were moving inside the forest at a speed similar to when moving in a plain, but there was no one falling behind.

There were the elf’s Schnee and Tiera, the beast’s Cuore, and the monster’s Yuzuha and Kagerou. It could be said that these members were specialized at moving inside a forest.

Wild animals ran away once Shin and his party approached. Since they didn’t hide their presences, they might be deemed as a dangerous beings.

“——Found it!”

Shin who activated both［Clairvoyance］and［Through Sight］, discovered a group of goblins moving in the forest.

Their height was about 140 cemels, and their skin was a green color. Compared to humans, their head was about twice as big; the structure of the face was ugly. Some of them were holding a dagger or short sword in their hand. 5 of them were around level

20, only one was level 31. The one with highest level appeared to be their leader, as it was holding a wooden shield.

Cuore also offered to cooperate, so they decided to kill one per person as they moved closer.

After confirming that all members had entered the range of attack, each of them took out their weapon. Throwing daggers for Shin and Schnee and bows for Cuore and Tiera. Needless to say, it was claws and fangs for Yuzuha and Kagerou.

While Tiera and Cuore drew their bows together, Shin and Schnee wielded the daggers in their hands. Yuzuha and Kagerou were crawling so they weren't noticed, and approached without making a sound.

“…Now!”

At Shin’s voice, daggers and arrows ran through the forest.

The daggers that Shin and Schnee threw, penetrated the head of the two goblins who were walking in front. And then, without any time for them to make a commotion, arrows pierced the heads of the two in the back.

As for the remaining two, their necks flew away from the claws of Yuzuha and Kagerou.

Even if it was natural for them, it was an instant kill. The ears were cut as proof of subjugation, and after gathering them together in one bag, it was stored in Shin’s Item Box.

Though this was already proved when he was shopping in the town, if several things are collected and put in one place, the items could be stored in the Item Box as one item. Turning it into a card was also possible.

However, the card became impossible to separate, when the card was materialized into pieces.

“The request is completed. Then, shall we go to Larua Grand Woods too?”

Including the travel time, it was only 1 and a half hours since the time they took to complete the request, and they have enough time left to head towards Larua Grand Woods.

“Alright then, let’s go. There are two ways, crossing the forest as it is, or using the main road, which would you choose?”

“Cuore is used to the forest, and we won’t be a hindrance, so it might be nice to go with crossing, right?”

“Kuu!”

As if to say “Agreed”, Yuzuha barked. Similarly, Kagerou which was next to Tiera also barked.

◆◆◆◆

Part 2.

When they got out the forest to the south, some plains appeared for a moment. They then further advanced for 30 more minutes. From there, the wagon was taken out and they advanced on the main road.

There were no particular events except for when Cuore was surprised at the speed of the wagon that Kagerou pulled.

Shin and his party finally arrived at Larua Grands Wood.

It was at the hill where Schnee and the others previously watched the duel between Shin and Girard, that they got off of the wagon.

“Amazing. Even after all of the flashy blows, this doesn’t look the right place.”

Shin, who looked at the forest while standing on top of the hill, was surprised about not seeing any traces of destruction. At the start of the fight with Girard, the exchange of skills from the[Cannon Wave] had mowed down a lot of trees. Though boulders and big trees were blown away due to the after-effects

of the fighting, damages were magnified as they were thrown onto the other trees on the ground. Shin had also caught a glimpse of the changes before.

However, now within the range of Shin's field of vision, he couldn't find any evidence of it.

"After seeing it, the vegetation from before and after the fight doesn't change, huh? Rather than restored as before, I think that the rapid growing plants covered the scars or something like that."

"Yeah. When I look at it closely, I can see a few young trees in several places."

When Schnee explained the state of the forest, Tiera also had the same opinion. While pointing at a portion of the forest, Tiera said "That is the place where it is growing, around the original forest." to Shin.

"It's just like Larua Grand Woods. Unfortunately, I don't understand it even if you tell me."

Shin was staring hard at the direction Tiera pointed at, but he wasn't able to distinguish the differences in the end.

To begin with, naturally other than the size, there was no distinction between the young and old trees.

"As one would expect from Schnee-dono and Tiera-dono. It took me about 10 years until I finally understood the differences."

“It couldn’t be helped I guess, since the sense related to forests are prominently keen for elves and pixies. But to be able to tell the difference by yourself is a great thing.”

Schnee praised Cuore, while smiling. She seemed to have directly taught Cuore how to tell them apart before. She was probably happy that Cuore could master it properly.

“Thank you very much.”

Cuore replied with a smile. As if she couldn’t bear the joy of it, her tail was wagging left and right in a big way.

“And, what should we do after this? We are doing the investigation, right?”

Shin asked Cuore, because he didn’t know what kind of method the investigation was going to use.

“For the investigation about the regeneration of the trees, we check whether or not there are unnatural plants that shouldn’t grow in these surroundings. Because it’s indeed impossible to look all around, the range is divided roughly, and I decide some points based on that.”

As Cuore said that, she took out a card from her pocket and materialized it. In the next moment, a map of Larua Grands Woods appeared. There were big trees, like landmarks, and other peculiar characteristics and so on that were drawn.

“With this tree as a mark in the a middle, the forest is divided. Because these landmarks do not change after they have regenerated, we should not lose sight of them.”

If ordinary adventurers were here, they would have to be cautious about not going too deep into the forest, but she didn’t have to worry about that if it was Shin and his party.

“…I feel guilty for me asking to accompany you, since I don’t seem to be helpful.”

To begin with, differentiating between trees that have been restored couldn’t be assigned to Shin. Because he couldn’t understand it even if Tiera taught him.

“Then, how about going together with Tiera? Tiera can harvest any plants that are found, and Shin can put them into the Item Box, so it will be efficient.”

Looking at Shin, who was sulking and feeling bad, Schnee made a suggestion.

“…That’s right. I think it will be most suitable for you two to pair, because I and Schnee-dono are able to use the Item Box.”

Cuore also agreed.

As for Shin, he could only answer yes because that was at least the only way he could be useful. It was completely reasonable that an Item Box member would be essential.

And though it was heard just now, Cuore was also able to use the Item Box. As for the card she pulled out from her pocket not too long ago, it was actually her using the Item Box.

On that subject, he remembered that Tiera talked about royal families and elders having the Item Box.

Cuore was a daughter of the Beast King, in short, a royalty. It was understandable that she could use Item Box, if she inherited the abilities as Girard's descendant.

"Then, let's divide into three sides. Just to confirm, have any changes taken place except the unnatural plant that appeared so far?"

Did something concern her mind on the harvesting? Schnee asked Cuore.

"As far as what has been confirmed, there's no such things. In fact, plants that don't grow naturally were discovered only twice in the past, when strong people fought in a duel. The first, that was found was after the duel between a Dragnil and Beast, was 'Fairy Grass'. The second that was discovered, after the duel between a Lord and Elf, was 'Phantom Grass'. That was the only two which were recorded. Because both were found at several places, I think someone will find something this time too."

However, it was said that because the numbers of growing plants increased, it wouldn't remain intact. It was only a temporary thing.

“How do you split the works? Is it good to divide it into 3 equal parts?”

Shin moved his finger to form 3 circular ranges on the map while Cuore listened.

As Cuore said, it was impossible to examine Larua Grand Woods with such a small number of people, so the scope of investigation must be narrowed to some degree.

Though the others didn’t take note of the drawing, all of the members understood the approximate ranges.

“Everyone might be unfamiliar with Larua Grand Woods, so I don’t mind if my area of responsibility increases.”

Toward Cuore who said that, Schnee disagreed.

“Because the investigation like this time was requested of me too, there is no problem as it is either. It’s better for you and me to increase our area of responsibility, and decrease the area that Tiera’s and Shin’s are in charge of instead. Even though Tiera is able to tell the difference, she hasn’t handled this kind of request before, so it might take more time than us.”

“I agree. I’d appreciate it if you could do that.”

Tiera agreed to Schnee’s proposal.

Tiera was hardly able to enter the forest for about 100 years. Even though she was an elf, the fact that she didn’t spend time going to the forest was undeniable.

In addition, Shin was going together with her. Schnee thought if there was only one beginner, the work would be delayed. At the same time, she considered this as a training in order to restore Tiera's intuition.

Meanwhile, Shin, in front of Schnee and Tiera who were able to differentiate the plants intuitively as elves, was reminded yet again about not being useful although he was the who had one who suggested they work together. Once again, his shoulders dropped.

"I'm sorry for being a burden…"

"I'll tell you how to spot the differences~"

Tiera patted Shin's shoulder in order to console him.

"It's alright, Shin-dono. I didn't know what's the differences were at first too."

While Cuore was a beast, she possessed the knowledges and experiences that could sense the changes in the forest quickly. However, that was the result of years of effort. If Shin could do it from the beginning, nobody would have a hard time.

"Well then, let's copy the map. It will be a troublesome if there is slip of memory."

Schnee who spoke, activated a non-system skill 「Transcription」. It was literally a copying skill, as patterns and characters were drawn on the paper.

In the game era, it was also a skill that was used to share map data among the players. Shin also learnt how to use it, but he was impressed as he thought 'It can be used like this, huh?'.

"Okay then, shall we start?"

In case a person finished quicker than assumed, they would join a person who hasn't finished yet, and the restrictions and the meeting place in case it didn't end was decided. Afterward, all members were scattered in the forest.

"Now quickly, which one is irregular?"

"The place is a little bit ahead, right? Since you'll lead the way, I'll learn it while actually seeing it."

While moving through the forest, Shin received guidance about the names and the medicinal effect of flower plants, which were not counted as items in the game, as well as the distinction between the old and young trees from Tiera.

There was no grasses named 'weed'; Even if there was such a word, the grass that looked identical to Shin had their own respective names. It was a different plant from other things, such as how its flower bloomed or how it dispersed seeds.

Tiera talked about the development of those flowering plants and its item utilisation in this world too. Shin was a little excited with the possibility of something new being made, if combined with his own techniques.

“Shin, is this a young or an old tree?”

“…Old tree?”

“Wrong, it’s a young tree.”

“…Really?”

“It’s the truth.”

However, it was another question whether or not Shin could tell the difference, even if he understood. Even Cuore took 10 years to accomplish such a feat. There’s no way the amateur Shin could easily do it.

“Hmmmm…”

Shin followed after Tiera’s example and along the way, the same questions were repeated, although most of them were correct only by chance. Even if Shin opened his eyes wide while looking at it, he couldn’t distinguish it at all.

“I cannot do it easily after all.”

“It’s difficult even for a High Human. huh?”

“Materials in the old days could have been distinguished with[Analyze] and [Appraisal], but for such grass, it was treated as an ordinary weed.”

To Tiera who was only reassured a little, Shin picked up the grass he was taught about a moment ago and answered.

The grass that Shin held, might be usable if he intended to use it as material. But if they had additional effects, the rate of failure

might rise in some cases. And there was no reason to check or to use the grass either.

“But if you can distinguish it easily, that would leave me in a fix. However, I can see the name of this medicinal herb with my[Analyze] too. Something like this and this, shouldn’t have grown in this area around here.”

“What?”

Shin stopped moving at Tiera’s statement. As far as Shin knows, it was appraisal that identifies an item. No matter how much he analyzed it closely, only information of “Grass A” was displayed.

By the way, what Tiera picked up just now was ‘Golden Grass’ and ‘Pure White Flower’, each of them were one of the ingredients for Potion One and Ether One. It was material with a prospect of recovery that was higher than a potion of low rank, even without being changed.

“The duel between me and Girard brought some kind of effect, huh?…That’s right, is there any difference between my [Analyze]and Tiera’s? No, but she learnt it from ‘Secret Book’ I gave…”

While storing the golden grass in the Item Box, Shin voiced his doubt.

“I don’t know. But only up to the name was displayed, when viewed with my[Analyze]. Though I heard it from master, I think detailed information will be displayed when appraisal is used, right? But there’s nothing like that.”

As Tiera said, if the conditions were met, the hints of compound and detailed effects of the item were displayed when appraisal was activated. However for Tiera, such information didn't appear.

"Really…hmm?"

Shin attempted to learn the name of the nearby grass by staring at it closely. But as expected, he couldn't find anything. At the same time, next to his view, he noticed something dark.

"Is this, black iron?"

What appeared on the ground, was a material that blacksmiths are familiar with.

Looking at its state, it might appear naturally from ground dug up by animals, or it came up to the surface as the soil was washed up by rains.

"…With only[Analyze]…"

Suddenly it occurred to Shin's mind, that he viewed the ore with an appraisal skill. And then, he looked at the black iron with nothing but [Analyze].

"…I can see it. Hey, really, I can see it"

"What's wrong?"

"Though I only looked at the metallic material with [Analyze] as an experiment, I can see its name. But it was something like 'Iron A' or 'Ore A' before though."

Shin's guess, where he thought the race characteristics and the occupation might be related, seemed to hit the mark. The name that was related to the metal was displayed as if it was natural.

In ability standpoint, Shin was at the pinnacle of blacksmithing, even though it was not his race characteristic. As a result, the name of things relevant for blacksmithing might be displayed.

"I wonder if there's some kind of meaning?"

"Eh? Wait a minute, don't you understand it on your own!"

Tiera said with a sullen expression at Shin who nodded his agreement.

"Sorry sorry. The job I do might be also similar to a dwarf I guess. So things like individual skills and race characteristics might have some sort of effect on analysis, don't you think?"

"I am elf so I can see plant-related things, and because Shin is a blacksmith you can see metal-related things?"

"Yeah, probably. Though it's only an inference, it's not off the mark I think."

Shin thought he would confirm it with Schnee and Cuore later.

"So, besides seeing Golden Grass and Pure White Flower, do you feel anything abnormal?"

"Oh, well. There's nothing special besides that. The only thing left is whether or not it will regenerate afterwards. But we don't need to worry about that."

Tiera's sense didn't seem to become dull. From her affirmation, without a doubt, it didn't feel as though there was any harm from her not entering the forest for a long time.

The investigation afterward was quick, partly because Shin's understanding of golden grass and so on as the materials.

Just in case, while Shin gathered it, Tiera examined whether there were changes elsewhere, and then moved away immediately if there was nothing.

Though Schnee and Cuore joined along the way, at that time, Shin and Tiera were almost finished examining the range entrusted to them.

After the investigation, Cuore reported the results.

"We discovered Golden Grass and Pure White Flowers here. How about everyone else?"

"I also saw the same. There are a large quantity of them too."

Schnee also seemed to have made a similar discovery.

"Here too, but the quantity was not so much."

"Well, it must not be growing at both places in large quantities."

Shin's remark was confirmed, as Tiera knew the detail of the materials too.

“By the way, though it had nothing to do with the investigation, when a non-appraisal item was checked with analysis, does it show the name of the things that are related to jobs and race?”

Shin confirmed what was on his mind with Schnee and Cuore.

“For me, if it were daggers and bows, I can see the name of magic items before the appraisal. Perhaps, it’s because I have used such weapons for a long time, no?”

Cuore displayed her own dagger and bow as she materialized it. Even from Shin’s eyes, it was understood that the items were maintained properly.

“I am similar with Tiera. I can see if it’s plant-related. A few ores and metals too, if it’s of the lower ranking ones.”

About the ores group, it might because of her watching Shin’s blacksmithing for a long time, was what Schnee said.

“Things, different from the game era, seem to appear steadily, huh?”

“Because we also don’t fully understand it.”

Schnee answered, to Shin who muttered small.

There were no particular troubles afterward, and the party returned to Elden.

It could be said it was already evening time. When they arrived at the guild, they headed straight towards the reception.

“The request has been completed. Please confirm it.”

“Understood――Yes, there’s no mistake for the the subjugation’s parts. The request is complete. Please take this paper here to the reward recipient counter over there.”

The receptionist who confirmed the goblin’s ears, wrote something on a paper and presented it to Shin. Like in Bayreuth’s guild, the rewards were not handed over at the reception desk.

“Also, I have one more thing to tell you.”

Before Shin who received the paper moved, the receptionist spoke.

“Yes, what is it?”

“To Shin-sama, we received a message from the guild master of the Bayreuth branch adventurers’ guild, Barlux-sama.”

“Message?”

“Yes. The same message was conveyed to each branch office. The contents are inside here.”

The receptionist handed a piece of envelope after saying so. The transmission was likely to have been written down via the Mind Chat.

“If it’s for Shin, there are other adventurers with similar names too, right?”

“Guild Cards can be used for identification. Because the magic reaction issued is peculiar to each card, unless it was forged, I would never mistake it with another person.”

“I see. I understand.”

Shin left the reception desk, and joined the others.

“Is it from Barlux?”

“It seems so.”

He nodded to Schnee who asked, and unsealed the envelope. There was a letter inside, and only some brief information was written. The content was “Greetings, Shin. There is a summons for you from the royal palace. I want you to return as soon as possible”.

“Why did you receive a summon from the royal palace?”

“Well, I have no idea.”

“It is something you don’t have knowledge of?”

“No…No, there’s not,… maybe?”

Though he quickly responded that he didn’t know to Tiera who was amazed, something came to his mind followed by Schnee’s remark.

(Don’t tell me, it’s about the Skull Face sword which flew into the royal castle?)

Besides that, he couldn’t think of anything else.

He thought about whether he had done anything that could relate him with the sword, then he recalled that he talked about the greatsword to Celica and Els.

The battle where he fought against a high-level Skull Face with a powerful weapon, was likely to have been circulated.

Since it was not written in the contents of the summon, he had no choice but to confirm it when he met Barlux afterward.

“Prior to rank up, shall I straighten up this one?”

No matter how much an adventurer was said to be have freedom, ignoring a summon from the royal palace was unthinkable.

Of course, even if Shin and the others ignored Bayreuth, they couldn’t be brought immediately.

However, there was no benefit even if they made trouble on their own accord. Even now, Shin still intended to act as a mere adventurer. The interference of the country would be troublesome if he, a High Human, was revealed.

To break off from the country, Shin didn’t know much about this world yet. Acting by common sense of the game and former world was a bad plan at this current stage.

“I’ll go together with you.”

“Me too.”

Schnee and Tiera declared as if it was natural to say. Cuore couldn't afford to go together as expected, and they parted momentarily here.

"Mmmm…"

"Well, don't make such gloomy face. For the time being, tell me when Wolfgang is available, because I have to hand over something."

Shin calmed down Cuore, who was suppressing her desire to go with them, which was reflected on her face with of all her heart. And then, he confirmed Wolfgang's schedule.

Since Wolfgang was busy, he thought maybe it was good after the investigation matter here was over, but it didn't go so well.

"Though the conference may be prolonged, because it should be paperwork after that, I think it's better for us to wait for the opportunity in the residence. So we won't be passing each other and so have to chase after him."

"Roger."

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Part 3.

When Cuore returned to the residence and asked one of the maids about Wolfgang's whereabouts, it seemed that Wolfgang had already returned, from the reply.

"Father, do you have a minute? Shin-dono seems to have something to talk about."

“Please come in.”

When Cuore knocked on the office door and stated the matter, a reply came in a flash.

Cuore opened the door, and Shin and the others entered the room. The office desk, chairs, bookshelves and so on, stress the simple, practicality look. Above the big desk, that was placed directly in front of the door, there were documents which Wolfgang had just finished signing. Mountains of paperworks which were not yet finished was also seen on the edge of the desk.

“I’m sorry for disturbing your work.”

“Not at all, this is also the job of the king. Leaving that aside, what can I help you with?”

“Oh, sorry for being abrupt, but I have to go to Bayreuth for a moment. Because I’m in a hurry, I have to depart immediately. So, I intend to hand over this before going.”

“Huh!? T-This is!!?”

Shin handed a card over, that he took out from the Item Box, to Wolfgang.

Wolfgang, who received it, had a shocked expression when he saw the drawing on the card, as a blurred voice leaked out.

“It’s Girard’s『Crushing Moon』. I already finished changing its owner, and it’s transferable for Wolfgang to use.”

“But I heard it was broken in the duel…”

“Who do you think made the『Crushing Moon』? Of course it’s possible for me to remake it. Besides, I was asked to hand it over, when the duel was over, by Girard originally. Because if it’s Ulu, he won’t misuse it, was what he said.”

“The founder…to me…”

Wolfgang stared at the card in his hand, as he was deeply moved.

『Crushing Moon』was a legendary weapon for the beasts of Falnido. He might be feeling the significance of having it in his hand.

“Next, I am giving you this one too.”

And, there was another piece.

What Shin passed to Wolfgang, was『Swift Fang』, which was said to be a similar weapon type as the arm guard,『Crushing Moon』. It was one of the weapons which Shin had entrusted to Girard, for 500 years, until their reunion the other day.

According to what he heard, the successive Beast Kings that were permitted to use『Swift Fang』by Girard, seemed to be recognized as the true King. If said in the reverse, a king who was not permitted to use『Swift Fang』, even if they had strong power, meant that they were not recognized by neither the people nor the retainers.

Girard apparently didn’t let anyone, who he deemed not suitable, even if it the person was his relative, to touch『Swift Fang』. All of

the successive kings had been a good rulers, which was definite proof that Girard had good eyes for judging character.

“Just in case, try to equip it, see if whether there are any defects.”

“Affirmative…”

Wolfgang nodded slightly and materialized the cards, then he equipped『Swift Fang』on both arms.

Because it also features an automatic adjustment of the size, there was no sense of discomfort either. Instead, Wolfgang was surprised that the power『Swift Fang』transmitted was stronger than the last time he previously equipped them.

“This is…How do I say…”

“It’s been upgraded. This is possible thanks to Girard.”

“……”

After『Swift Fang』,『Crushing Moon』was equipped.

Wolfgang involuntarily shivered, as he felt power that couldn’t be compared to『Swift Fang』.

“Ulu will have to choose the following successor on your own.”

After all, Girard was no longer there to see it through.

From now on, people who inherit『Crushing Moon』, have that responsibility. Again, this was also one of the king’s responsibilities.

“That obligation, I accept it firmly.”

Wolfgang bowed properly, with his fists clenching tight, in order to focus his mind.

Shin thought, that with that straightforward look it would be all right if this was the case. When Shin conveyed that it was a summon from the guild and he had to leave at this time, Wolfgang presented a necklace made of animal fangs, probably shaped after a wolf's fangs, to Shin. At the center of the fang, there were drawings of a wolf in a crest style.

"This is?"

"That is the item which is treated as our family crest. Whenever you need me, if you shown this to a person in the residence, you will be able to contact me immediately."

It goes without saying that exploitation was strictly prohibited. The necklace was accepted, thanked, and stored in the Item Box.

And then, Shin and his party appeared outside of Falnido though the underground tunnel which they used when they came in for the first time.

They advanced for about ten minutes, after being seen leaving by Cuore, then the wagon was put back into a card after making sure there was no one around.

"Well, shall we hurry up and return?"

"We are going there by Metastasis, right? Is the location the site where Tsuki no Hokora was before?"

To Schnee, who noticed it when getting off from the wagon, Shin nodded and took out a crystal stone.

“Indeed, I don’t know about other places, but there is no problem over there I think. It takes time to come back from here, too.”

“What a luxury…”

The reproachful remark from Tiera was ignored.

“Then, let’s go!”

After confirming that all members were ready, mana was transmitted to the crystal stone.

In the next moment, the surrounding landscape changed, and three people and two animals were in the site where Tsuki no Hokora was set up before.

Immediately after the transfer, Shin sensed that there were multiple responses in the neighborhood.

However, they didn’t seem to have noticed Shin and the others because of the hiding skills which were used beforehand.

(“There are lots of people here?”)

(“Yeah, they’re still monitoring after all. Moreover, it doesn’t seem to be only one force.”)

While having a Mind Chat with Yuzuha, Shin probed into the appearances of the distributed people who were monitoring.

When thinking about the deployment, there were 2 or 3 separated groups.

“Because Tsuki no Hokora disappeared suddenly, they may think that it might appear again. It’s likely that they have forgotten about the possibility that it can be carried.”

If it was the old generation, that lived before the Dusk of the Majesty, they would know about such a thing. However, because the owner of Tsuki no Hokora, Shin, a High Human was thought to have gone extinct, they haven’t thought about that possibility yet.

“How did you answer when you were asked at the commission before, Schnee?”

“I only said I don’t know. Though I understood only Shin could wipe out Tsuki no Hokora, it felt like Shin had disappeared together with the store. To be honest, I was really anxious at that time.”

However, it was only a needless anxiety. Schnee continued, while smiling, and began to walk towards the gate.

The atmosphere that almost became solemn, was erased by the smile.

“I’m gonna leave you behind~”

Tiera called out and overtook Shin who quieted down at the answer.

“Ah, sorr…wait, it’s me that was called by Barlux!?”

“What are you being absentminded for?”

“Well, if I wait for the partner to return without knowing how long, I can’t imagine it in any way.”

Not even Shin understood Schnee’s word of anxious.

It’s not easy to forget their loved ones. But, Shin’s view of life was at most just a little over 20 years, so he couldn’t imagine it for 500 years.

In response to Schnee’s words, he carelessly thought about what would he do, if he was in that situation.

“Isn’t it impossible to do?”

“What an immediate remark!?”

Shin retorted.

The answer that came back without pause from Tiera, was indeed simple.

“The sense of time is very different for elves and humans, considering how long the life span differs. Because master is a High Elf, it was more cruel than me in that situation.”

While walking next to Shin who has caught up, Tiera spoke in an admonishing way.

Elves have a long life span, next to pixies. Therefore, for a short-lived kind, such as humans and beasts who could only live for around 100 years, even the sense of ‘waiting’ was greatly different.

It was only natural, ten years for human was a long time, but ten years for elf feels like less than one year for a human when thinking of their life span. It was also the cause for why long-lived species are known as easygoing fellows.

“Isn’t it nice? I’ll wait if you want me to, you know?”

“Is that how it works?”

“It is. To lose a reason to live, is the beginning of hell for the long-lived kind like us.”

Perpetual youth and longevity; Though people continue pursuing this, it’s reflected differently in the eyes of a person who has it.

“When I think of it seriously, it is a very terrible situation, huh?”

Shin spoke in a serious tone.

“That’s how it is. When I think about it, I want to pretend a bit longer. But when Shin became serious suddenly, the mood felt a bit off.”

“Can you stop always giving out those, “Live life properly” remarks that you always do?!!?”

The serious tone from Shin changed, with a single phrase from Tiera.

A little bit ahead, Schnee stopped and was waiting. Shin and Tiera quickened their pace and caught up to Schnee.

“Shin is the same as usual, serious in unexpected places.”

“Shut it!”

Apparently the conversation was heard by Schnee. Shin sulked and replied to Schnee who said it in a teasing way.

Chapter 2.

Part 1.

Without taking too much time, Shin and the others reached the south gate of Bayreuth.

There was a long line to the gate, as usual, but it seemed to be better than before. Shin showed his adventurer card as the identification paper to the guard, and passed through the gate.

Though it was unknown until now, Schnee surprisingly had an adventurer card, too. It seemed like a C rank, because the color of the card was red.

“Schnee, did you enter the guild?”

“It’s for identification purposes only.”

It seemed like she could ask for anything from Barlux, to have the card issued. Its function was for nothing more than identification purposes, instead of not being able to take requests, she also said she did not have any obligation to respond to any emergency requests and the likes.

It’s like a special measure because of Schnee’s position.

“And it’s because they were indebted to me for many things.”

Schnee spoke with a grin on her face, and Shin felt sympathy toward all of the members of the adventurers guild.

As they entered the ramparts, without making any side trips, they headed toward the guild.

When the door was opened and they entered inside, similar with Falnido, Schnee and Tiera became the main focus.

Schnee with the dog ears, tail equipment, and active attire, which she showed in Falnido, made the male's eyes present be glued onto her. Somehow it felt like the passionate eyes of some women were mixed in it, too.

Because it was routine for hooligans to pick on beautiful women, Shin quickly headed to the reception before someone came near.

"Hello, I've received the report about the summons from the guild."

"Shin-sama, it's been a long time. Please wait a minute as we convey the message. Cilica, please."

"Yes yes~"

It was the sisters, Celica and Cilica that were at the reception desk. When Cilica was called out by Celica, she disappeared out to the back at a quick pace. Though they were twins, their actions and personalities were not similar at all.

"Do you know what kind of business they have with me?"

"No, we were not told about the details. Though it's different for Els who has a high position."

“Ah well, I just wanted to ask, please don’t worry about it.”

“Actually, if it’s Shin-sama, I think you’ll be summoned before long though.”

“Eh, why is that?”

“Because Shin-sama is not an ordinary adventurer.”

“…I see.”

It was said because suddenly subduing a high-rank monster alone was an unthinkable thing to do, according to people in this world. So Shin being common was out of question.

“Looks like your companions are all beautiful ladies.”

“Ugh, is that so? Though I can’t deny it…Hey, but Yuzuha is a monster. It’s just my adventurer’s acquaintances that are women——”

“Ara, I never saw you talk with a man before though.”

“There is no such.. thing? Umm, yes, Wilhelm, I received a request together with Wilhelm before.”

“Eh!…”

For some reason, from Shin’s one word, the hall fell silent.

“Shin-sama, is what you spoke just now true?”

“But it wasn’t a regular request, more or less. Wait, why did everyone go silent?”

While being conscious that eyes were focusing on him, Shin questioned Celica whom had an expression of someone who had just heard an unbelievable thing.

“That man rarely joins a party with another person. Even though his fighting power is said to be S-rank, there are many rumors flying around. He seems unapproachable to everyone, too.”

But rumors are unreliable, Celica continued with a small sigh. The authenticity of the rumors might be understood, because she was a part of the guild staff.

“Well, that guy is misunderstood easily I guess.”

The biggest problem would be his character. Wilhelm was not the type that wore a friendly atmosphere. Because the person himself behaved like that, if he didn’t make any effort to solve someone’s misunderstanding, the rumors would not disappear.

Though Shin heard that Wilhelm always kept in touch with other adventurers, who graduated from the orphanage, listening to Celica’s story, it was very likely that he only accepted solo requests.

“Wilhelm-sama is very excellent person himself though.”

“Right?”

To solo, unlike a party, one could only rely on oneself, when in case of an emergency. Thus, his sense of danger and techniques to measure the opponent’s abilities became higher than an adventurer of a similar rank.

Moreover, Wilhelm was a Chosen One, there was no need to state how excellent that is.

“Shin-sama, preparations are done, please come now.”

“Understood. Then lead the way.”

When Cilica returned, they stopped talking and went to Barlux’s office.

Schnee and Tiera would be waiting in the hall. Yuzuha, who rode on Shin’s head before, was entrusted to Schnee.

When Shin entered the office, Barlux and an old man whom he didn’t recognize, sat down on a sofa.

“First of all, have a seat. It was faster than I expected.”

“It’s because I originally was going this direction.”

Shin answered Barlux while sitting on a sofa.

Of course, this was a lie. If he had heard the message near Beirun, then it fit it well timewise, so he decided to say so.

“I’m sorry for rushing it. Ah, this mage, who is in charge of jewel appraisal in our guild, is Arad. It’s him that appraised the jewel of the Skull Face which you brought in before.”

“I’m Arad Royl, pleased to meet you.”

Without doubting Shin’s words, Barlux introduced Arad. (T/N: To refresh back who is Arad, refer Vol. 1 Ch 4 – Part 1)

No matter how many branch offices there were in each country, they could not check where the adventurer received the message

at one by one. Unless, the person was on the black list and under surveillance. Shin, under the present conditions, didn't have the guilds distrust towards him when that investigation was conducted. For Shin's high prowess in combat, this also could be explained as a Chosen One category.

"I'm Shin. I hope to get along with you as well."

Shin also replied to the old man as politely as possible.

Since the story of the Skull Face already came out, he thought 'It is this after all, huh?' while putting up his guard.

"Though you already heard it from the message, Shin, you are being summoned by the royal palace."

"For the time being, can I hear the reason?"

"For that, I will explain it to you."

When the reason was asked from Barlux, Arad took over the talks.

"Before that, do you know the story, about where a sword flew into the king's castle?"

"Something flew in…Only to that degree."

"That's fine. It was actually a greatsword with a white blade."

"A Greatsword, huh?"

I know, was what Shin wanted to answer but endured it somehow. He happened to know too much after all.

“Moreover, the greatsword pierced and stuck into the wall of the second princess Bayreuth kingdom’s bedroom. It also caused a lot of clamour in the kingdom.”

“……”

Shin couldn’t help thinking, ‘Are you serious?’. It was only natural that it became an uproar.

“Fortunately, no one was hurt when it pierced the wall. The question is the greatsword. It’s bestowed with a good attribute and the material used is excellent, in short; It is a very good sword. It seems to even rival the country’s treasured sword when put side by side, if I have to say so as an appraiser.”

“…That’s amazing.”

It’s exposed! Who did it, that was definitely coming to light. While thinking about that, Shin inwardly arrived at the stage of resignation.

Perhaps after this, Shin might be questioned about the connection between his ability and the Skull Face.

Without hearing it to the end, Shin understood. Rather, he should know by the flow of the conversation. It was a common pattern. He didn’t read all of those fantasy novels just for mere fun.

“By the way, the jewel of the Skull Face you defeated, it was clad in a very strong magic power. It was quite a high-level one.”

“That’s right, I think.”

“According to what I heard, it’s level was 359. It’s at the level where average adventurers would be killed during an encounter. However, for someone who was still at G rank at the time they were facing it, and far from escaping, rather it was actually defeated by…you, are you a Chosen One?”

The calm air changed sharply, as Arad asked.

“… That is correct.”

There is no answer besides that, Shin thought while nodded.

When Shin answered obediently, Arad dissipated the dangerous air, and returned to his original calm mood.

“You even know the words ‘Chosen One’, huh?…Well if it’s you, the Skull Face that held the large sword would be defeated. Perhaps, when the skill was used at the end of the battle, the greatsword was blown off to the place in question.”

“How do you know it ended up to there?”

“I haven’t lived a long time just for show. I also heard your weapon was shattered at that time.”

“Indeed, it was shattered. Only the hilt remained——By the way, why is it that you think I was involved? I understand wanting to associate that greatsword to the Skull Face situation, but I don’t think you are suddenly convinced from the evidence though.”

Shin didn’t think that the people of the royal palace would make a move just by that reasoning.

“Of course, there was someone investigating the person behind it. Also, the Skull Face was examined immediately. The matter of the jewel was found out, and the investigation requests came out to examine that together with the greatsword. In the aforementioned greatsword, though there is only a little, there are the remnants of magic power left on the sword. Furthermore, it was matched with the magic power of the jewel. It didn’t reveal how you did it though.”

“I see, so there is such method, huh?”

It seemed to be a fantasy technique similar to our version of DNA analysis. The quality of magic power might be different in individuals.

“That’s why once it was understood up to there, one thing after another was revealed. When the fact that you brought in the jewel came to light, the summons appeared.”

“Even for a guild, this kind of thing can’t simply be revealed, right?”

“No, there’s no way to deceive when it’s been exposed to that extent.”

There was no reason for the guild to protect Shin. If seen from the guild, Shin was only a G rank novice adventurer at that time.

Of course the story was different when it was about a chosen one, there was a possibility that the royal family would be exposed to danger.

However, because Shin held the letter of introduction from Tsuki no Hokora, that situation ended without turning worse. Moreover, since Barlux had reported about the time when they had met, he had judged that Shin would not be the type of person who held hostility, at least toward the kingdom.

To begin with, to have malicious intentions toward the princess, who was in the upper rank of Chosen Ones, was way too careless.

“Somehow, it was useful for the first time.”

After hearing that story, Shin felt grateful for the letter of introduction for the first time.

“And here’s the main problem. Shin, the one that summoned you was none other than the second princess.”

“The second princess?”

“She seems to be interested in you; Shin, who knocked down the Skull Face which held the greatsword. Because she is a Chosen One, too.”

“So, is that it? She wants to fight against me?”

“It would be nice if it could be settled with only that.”

From Barlux’s remark, it indicated that it wouldn’t happen.

“Then what’s beside it? Don’t tell me, she wants me to take responsibility because I almost inflicted injuries to the royal family?”

“No, it’s not that. To tell you the truth, similar Skull Faces had appeared in the vicinity of the Wraith Plains. The princess also participated in its subjugation, but from that experience, she knows that even she couldn’t afford to go easy if she’s fighting solo, so she seems to want to persuade you into being one of her people.”

“I’m saved if its going this direction, but…what’s next?”

Besides, what came to Shin’s mind was something like government service recruitment. Since there were people serving the country among the chosen ones, it might not be impossible.

“Well, for that, I don’t know it either.”

“Politicians, are only but the *evil spirits residing in the mountains and rivers.” (T/N: This idiomatic expression[魑魅魍魉], literally means evil spirits of rivers and mountains)

It was a story that was not laughable on Shin’s side.

“Okay, I understand the story for the time being. I can only keep going. Is there no specific time for the summon?”

Shin asked Barlux.

“For that, we will contact them from here. That’s right, how about 9’s bells tomorrow, good?”

“I’d like it. Ah, then what clothes should I wear? Because I didn’t expect to meet the royal family.”

Though Girard was also considered as royalty, they had the familiarity as friends, and because Shin was treated like a guest in Falnido, he didn't mind his clothes in particular. Because everyone around dressed in clothes that emphasized ease of movement, he couldn't use it as a reference in the opinion of a royal castle such as Bayreuth.

"Dress code is not demanded, for an adventurer who is not a noble. You should keep your appearance neat though."

"To begin with, the armed state can be said to be the uniform of an adventurer. And there's hardly a guy that possesses clothes similar to a noble."

Hearing Barlux and Arad talking, there seemed to be no regulations on that subject.

"Is there anything else you want to ask? I think I can advise a little."

Arad asked Shin.

"…I don't have anything on my mind in particular. You might say, because it's my first time like this."

"It might not meet with your expectations. The next thing that we are able to say is, do not make a commitment due to such a place. Depending on the other party, because they might bring up again about your fault persistently for a moment, it might be depressing for you."

"Haha, I'll be careful."

Somehow a genuine feeling could be sensed from Arad's words. He might have experienced it himself.

"Old man Royl dislikes nobles. Though it doesn't apply to all nobles, well because there are such people too, you should really be careful."

"I understand."

Shin replied to Barlux with a wry smile.

Actualy, like in novels and anime he had seen, he expected the existence of corrupt nobles that were only skillful at faultfinding.

Shin has not yet met a noble in this world. However, people raised in the privileged class who were only good at looking down at others, often existed.

Afterwards, Shin learnt about some etiquettes and left the office.

When he returned to the hall, there was a crowd in the corner of the hall.

"Yeah, indeed, it's as I expected."

Needless to say, at the center of the crowd was Schnee and Tiera.

Shin consented because he expected it to turn this way if the two people were left alone.

"Hiss!!"

Yuzuha was heard to be threatening.

The surrounding men that enclosed them, probably didn't know that they would become minced meat the moment that Yuzuha got involved.

Still, because it would be unpleasant to have casualties inside the guild, Shin approached the crowd before Yuzuha exploded.

"Excuse me. Tiera, let's go."

"Ah, yes!"

Schnee, who perceived Shin approaching, began to walk out with Tiera.

Additionally, at the same time, a slightly intimidating air was given out by Schnee. Defeated by that pressure, the men that encircled them backed off for several steps. Schnee and the others weaved their way out through the space resulting from that, and escaped from the crowd.

Shin realized that the men who were following the two people with their eyes, were also paying attention to him. Shin felt the pressure that he had never felt in real life.

(The day I receive this kind of stare finally comes.)

If he was very thick-headed, he might of not been aware of those envious eyes. While feeling depressed, Shin had an indescribable mood.

"Did they invite you two to a party?"

"Half of it was for a party invitation, the other half was a tea break invitation."

“So did you accept any of it?”

“There are none.”

That evaluation from Schnee, spoken while having a perfect smile, was indeed sharp.

Her eyes stated that it’s not even worth considering.

“To have such a good matching level with Master, there are virtually none.”

Tiera said in an amazed way.

From the start, Schnee never thought of joining others except Shin.

“It’s only natural. Leaving that aside, how was the talk?”

Schnee asked.

“For the time being, I’ve heard about the subject. Before I explain, let’s move to another place. Here is a bit…”

It was not the kind of conversation done in an attracting attention situation.

Their moving destination was Bear Point Pavillion. When Shin stayed there last time, he had confirmed that the soundproofing was reliable.

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“Welcome! Ara, Shin-san. Long time no see.”

“It’s been a long time. Are there 2 rooms available?”

“We do have vacant rooms, but…before that, come here for a bit.”

“Hmm? Ah, what’s the matter?”

The ‘poster girl’, Tsugumi, pulled Shin until they were near the counter.

With a suspicious face, Tsugumi started talking in a lower volume.

“Hey hey, who are those beautiful woman?! There are many beautiful people among the elves, but the beast people next to you, they belong on a different level!! What kind of magic did you use!?”

While skillfully shouting in low voice, Tsugumi kept on talking without pause.

Tsugumi, without any adverse effects, was called a beautiful girl herself. However, Schnee and Tiera, seen from Tsugumi’s point of view, were on another whole different level.

“Various things happened and I can’t say the details.”

“Eh~”

“Don’t ‘Eh’ me. You shouldn’t pry into customers’ affairs.”

“But, you just became an adventurer no more than a month ago, how did you get entangled with such two beautiful women? I’m not worried or anything, but something is wrong.”

“Hey! Hey! Though I understand your feelings, this is no good, you know?”

“Che —”

“Don’t sulk!”

Was it because of a lack of entertainment? She seemed to have a fancy about this sort of story.

Were Shin and the others common adventurers, he could talk about story that they came across each other by chance. However, there were circumstances for Shin and Schnee, so he couldn’t reveal the detailed contents.

“Sigh, I thought I could listen to interesting stories again after such a long time.”

“Don’t joke around.”

Contrary to his way of talking, Shin was amazed at her state, which didn’t seem to be very disappointed.

Did she not have the motivation to ask about it persistently? After Tsugumi returned to the counter, she waited on customers normally.

Shin rented a single room for himself, and a twin room for Schnee and Tiera. Because he didn’t know how much time it would take due to tomorrow, he handed each one Jul gold coin for the time being. He also had Tsugumi to speak up if it started to run out.

It was just at the right time so they had a lunch, and then, they gathered in Schnee and Tiera's room afterward.

"——and well, that's what I was told. I probably have to fight and so on, I think."

When he spoke about the discussion he had with Barlux and Arad, Schnee nodded as she consented.

"I see. There was such a thing happening before our reunion, huh?"

"A sword that flew into the royal castle, what have you done…"

"I'm not doing it because I like it, okay."

"Kuu? Shin is amazing~"

Tiera was astonished and Yuzuha, who might not understand it well, tilted its head.

"According to Shin's words, it's possible for the country to invite you, whether or not you enter the government service. Or, it's possible that it's recommended that you set up a marriage with a high nobility to some extent."

"I understand about the government service, but marriage?"

"Yes, if the second princess in question grasped the Skull Faces' fighting power accurately, she should be convinced that Shin's ability is among the upper class of Chosen Ones. Because the power of a country is said to be proportional to the number of Chosen Ones, I expect she will actively try to win you over."

“After the story about the princess, may I refrain from the marriage meeting? I don’t mean for things to go like this right away.”

Shin didn’t have the intention to enter government service or being tied with marriage.

And he didn’t have the motivation to talk about how to decline such a plan and so on from the beginning.

“I think there’s no problem if you decline to enter the government service. There are not many people who become knights from adventurers.”

“Is that so?”

“There are many people who hate being bound by rules. Also, viewing from the party members, because the recruitment is a loss for them, they refrain from doing it.”

The types that entered the government service, from adventurers, were the people who were solo and people who didn’t join a party as a fixed member.

“And now, Shin is in a party with us, so if you put that as a reason, it would be difficult to reject it.”

“Then, the problem now is the marriage, huh? It’s obvious that if I decline this without a good reason, then troublesome things will come about.”

“Regarding that, should I pretend to be your fiance?”

“Ah, I can be that guy who is already engaged to his partner, huh?”

Schnee expected that a new fiance wouldn’t be pushed onto a person who was already engaged.

It was certainly not bad as an excuse. Though, it wouldn’t be assured that a noble would give up so easily.

“It’s unreasonable to force it too much, so it’s their loss if they continue to offend you. In some cases, Tiera too, if she pretended, they at least won’t even think of tempting her as your woman.”

“Uhm, me?”

Tiera asked.

“Ara, you don’t like it?”

“No, if it’s about pretending, I’m good but…”

If it is only pretending, Tiera was also okay with it.

“Kuu! Then Yuzuha and Shin can become a couple too!!”

“Wait, Yuzuha, it’s not like that! I’ll be killed by society!!”

However, when Yuzuha announced its candidacy, to an extent that it even transformed into its female human form, because of a you-know-what misunderstanding, Shin hurriedly put a stop to it.

Anyway, Yuzuha could only turn into the little girl mode after all, rather than the figure of the voluptuous beautiful woman

from the game era. To dabble with a little girl could be considered to be on the path to becoming a pervert at full speed.

“This time it is just pretending, only pretending. It’s not real, okay?”

“Kuu? You are not mating with Schnee?”

“Hey! You must not say such a thing with that appearance!!”

“Mattiiinnn…!?”

To the unexpected word that came out from Yuzuha’s mouth, Shin was at his wits’ end and Schnee had stiffened.

Though Yuzuha’s original knowledge was sealed, it was not strange even if it knew. However, it was different when it was in its young fox mode, when such a word was spoken in the little girl mode, he strongly felt that there were problems in various ways.

For the ‘mating’ word, it might be due to its strong animal’s sense from its nature.

And, other than Shin, who was denying it with all his might, Schnee’s face was dyed in red.

“For the time being, let’s calm down.”

Though Tiera was the one who spoke out, she was the calmest in that situation.

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Part 2.

Dawn of the next day.

Letter from Barlux and all kinds of permits were received at the inn, and Shin finished preparing for his summons at the castle.

As a result of a discussion between Shin, Schnee and Tiera, for the time being, Shin would go to the royal castle to see the other party's attitude. If he conveyed that he had both a party and a fiancée, the other side should not consider it unusual; However, he couldn't be careless.

"Then, I'm going. I'll leave Yuzuha with you."

"See you soon. If there is anything, contact me with Mind Talk."

"You have to hold back when you fight, because it'll be terrible if you hurt the princess."

"It will be fine…probably."

"Seriously, you really have to watch out, okay?"

After such an exchange with Schnee and Tiera, Shin left the Bear Point Pavilion.

Since the other party was said to be royalty, Shin's attire was one of the originals from the game era, ceremonial attire from Kalkia which was currently called a 'Sacred Place'.

You might say it looked like a ceremonial military uniform that combines practicality and glamour; it was a wonderful item. The accessories' rank was not too expensive and it was treated as a set equipment.

Partly because Kalkia was originally the first base, after starting an adventure, one could buy it in the arms shop for beginners. Naturally, its performance was also low.

What Shin put on was a formal dress that was a red associated with captains. Besides that, there was also a piece of clothing that was colored a blue specific to vice-captains and other low rank clothing which had slightly less performance than that of an ordinary soldier and so on. When these items came together, it was referred to as a set.

“Now then, what will happen now?”

While checking the map displayed at the edge of his view, Shin faced the gate in the inner wall.

The King’s castle was located in the center of the Bayreuth kingdom and it was surrounded by the houses of the rich, such as nobles, wealthy merchants and the like. Though it seemed to be a general residential area originally, a wall around it was erected as the population rose, and the living area was segregated off except for those of higher social status.

The boundary that separated the living district between nobles and ordinary people was the inner wall Shin headed towards. Because it was originally an outer wall, it was reinforced sturdily. Was there a powerful magic user? The degree of reinforcement was top class.

As for Shin, he only prayed that the day when the inner wall was invaded would never come.

“Well, I think it won’t fail here though.”

As he walked for a while, a gate smaller than the one on the outside wall came into view.

Like the outside wall, the inner wall also had south, north, east and west gates. And the comings and goings were checked.

There were a lot of people with high status who lived there and a person with a clear position, to a certain extent, could pass through without an identity check.

Although that was the case, there was a suspicious looking D rank adventurer there now, and if not for the request he received, he would have been turned away at the gate. In the letter that had arrived from Barlux this morning, there had been a permit to enter the inner wall attached to it.

“…Good, enter.”

Spoke the soldier who was guarding the gate after he compared the permit alternately with another document.

When the permit was accepted, Shin stepped inside the inner wall.

“…This is a quiet upper-class residential area, huh?”

There were almost no pedestrians, unlike the outside. The only people walking appeared to be servants from their clothes. Most people traveled on horse-drawn carriages. Of course, there were no stalls and so on. It was so quiet that it felt like he was in a completely different country.

(3, 4, 5,…8 people, huh?)

On his way to the royal castle, Shin felt the glances directed to him.

[Hiding]skills of both martial arts and magic were used, surrounding Shin as he moved while his observers maintained a certain distance. The colors displayed on his map were green, so they didn't seem to be hostile for the moment.

"There's no sign of them making a move, huh? From what I've heard of the princess, I have a feeling that she wouldn't think of doing something like this."

From Barlux's story, he had the impression that the princess was likely to come over directly rather than hiding and watching.

Though it was just his assumption, there might be other forces that were moving.

"…Ah, I want to go back…"

They were certainly Shin's true feelings.

Though he couldn't return now since he had come this far, he disliked unpleasant things. With that state of mind, Shin stepped forward to the royal castle.

“Excuse me, I received a summons from the second princess and so, came here. Can you pass that on?”

“I’ve heard the news. Please present your permit.”

Shin talked to the palace guard, that was defending the castle gate, to obtain permission to enter.

As for the story, it seems to have been well circulated. The palace guard checked the permit Shin received from Barlux again and then put him in the guard’s office which was located beside the gate. It seemed that the palace guard didn’t intend to open the gate for Shin alone.

“I will call your escort now. Please wait for a while.”

“Okay, I got it.”

Because he had nothing to do, he looked around to kill time.

The maintained road extended to the inside of the castle. One could get off from a wagon that entered inside without getting wet even in the rain.

After waiting for a while, he saw a mounted figure coming in his direction. A person in red armor was taking the reins. The person stopped the horse in front of Shin and dismounted.

“Excuse me. You are the adventurer Shin, correct?”

“Yes, I am, and you are…”

“I am Gadras Jarre. I have been ordered by princess Rionne to greet you. I’ll be your escort, so follow me.”

“I understand.”

Shin nodded and followed after Gadras.

Shin, while walking, checked Gadras’s stats.

————『Gadras Jarre　Level 188　Dark Knight』

Level 188. Shin remembered that numerical value. He heard it when the first time he met Barlux, the ‘leader of the knights’ might be him.

As for Gadras’ main job, Dark Knight was one of the advanced level jobs that derived from a knight. Moreover, the armor he wore was a lower end《Unique》grade Scale Horn Armor. It was occupational equipment that required suitable stats and level, and a tiny presence of sharpened valor was emitted from it.

No matter how much Shin was regarded as an upper class Chosen One, he kept thinking about how someone who was considered a part of the kingdom’s strongest force came to pick him up expressly.

Did they want to indirectly convey that he was worthy of it?

Or, was it because an ordinary soldier couldn’t hold him down if he acted out violently?

It was impossible for Shin who was not familiar with this class of people to read into the thoughts of these royal nobles.

Shin followed Gadras obediently, but somehow they hardly passed by anyone.

“You, are you actually of a noble family lineage somewhere?”

Gadras asked out of the blue.

“No, I’m just a commoner you can find anywhere…”

If Schnee and the others were to hear that from Shin, ‘Are you in any position to say that?’, would probably be the reply he would get.

“Is that so? Ah, just call me Gadras. I became a knight from an adventurer, so to be humble myself doesn’t match with my nature.”

“Then, I’ll call you Gadras-san.”

“Well, that’s fine I guess. Let’s return to the topic at hand. When I was summoned to the castle for the first time, they were shocked by my armor. As an adventurer raised as a commoner, you should also pay attention to your attire properly. There are many ignorant people, so your clothes can be easily misinterpreted.”

It seemed like it wasn’t necessary to come dressed in formal attire.

‘Did I make a mistake?’ Shin thought, but decided to heed Barlux’s advice for the time being.

“It’s because I heard that you should maintain a neat appearance from the guild master. Actually, I was worried if this was fine.”

“Well, it’s not a bad thing to choose clothes according to the destination. And I think it’s rather nice.”

“Since it’s my first time coming to a castle, I prepared it in a hurry.”

As they walked while having such exchanges, Gadras stopped in front of a door. As Shin looked at the door, he noticed that the grade of ornaments was different from the others.

“Princess Rionne is in here. You don’t need to be so tense too, because the second princess is not the kind of person who demands formalities from an adventurer.”

“I’ll do my best.”

Gadras knocked on the door, and reported that Shin had arrived.

Before long, the door was opened from inside. When Gadras and Shin entered inside, the door was closed immediately.

Shin wondered whether there was a female maid, but it was a male knight who opened and closed the door.

————『Feyzel Adith　Level 172　Paladin』

As for his appearance, he had the look of a mild-tempered man with blond hair and blue eyes. His main job was a Paladin. This man might be a Chosen One too.

On that subject, Wilhelm also said there were more Chosen Ones than the ones publicly announced.

Since he couldn't stare at the man too much, he turned his attention to the front right away.

There was an elegant table and a fancy chair in the center of the room. A beautiful woman was sitting on the chair. Fine golden hair was tied at the back of her head, but it still reached all the way down her back. Her deep crimson eyes, which looked like rubies, stared at Shin. Her figure was pleasant too, even a certain 'part' of her seemed to rival Tiera.

Only her clothes were far from the image of a princess. For the upper half of her body, a leather type armor covered from her chest to her abdomen. In addition, a white jacket was worn above it. And for her lower half, there were red hot pants and boots that went up to her knees with a similar color.

Speaking of the jacket, because it wasn't buttoned, Shin could clearly see her cleavage pushed up by the leather armor from his location. This was totally different from the princess he imagined.

————『Rionne Strail Bayreuth　Level 230　Magic Swordswoman』(T/N: I may have stated her main job as Dark Knight before.)

Although her name and level were displayed, Shin understood that excluding him, she was the strongest in that room simply from the presence she emitted.

Shin guessed that she probably wore those clothes for combat. Apparently, a match seemed inevitable.

"Thanks for coming. I'm Rionne Strail Bayreuth, this country's second princess. My best regards."

"I'm the adventurer, Shin. Thank you for inviting me here today."

He bowed his head while introducing himself.

"Oh my! This is turning into a serious talk. I don't really care for etiquette, so you don't need to worry about manners. Feel free to call me Rionne."

"…Then, Rionne-sama it is…"

Though Shin thought 'isn't it bad?' for the princess to not care about courtesy, but still, Shin avoided pointing it out.

As she frequently appeared in the downtown area, her activities as a princess would put adventurers to shame. ‘There’s also such a thing’, Shin convinced himself.

Her beautiful appearance was princess caliber, but she didn’t exude the dignity of someone from a royal family. Was this a positive or negative for the royal family? It seemed opinions could differ on this matter.

“Princess, I wouldn’t do that in the first meeting. It will cause a misunderstanding.” (T/N: Having a boy call a girl by her first name is typically done only by those in a relationship.)

“He is a person who we may soon fight together with as a companion. Wouldn’t this be better than creating a strange barrier between us because I’m from the royal family?”

“…Shin, it’s unfortunate, but this is how the princess is. Please don’t worry about your social status and act casually.”

“Yes…I, will do my best…I guess?”

Shin thought ‘rather than a princess, she should be called a sociable adventurer.’

Gadras’s tone too, for some reason, became less formal. Apparently, this seemed to be their usual way of exchange between lord and retainer.

When Shin fleetingly glanced at Feyzel, while feeling at a loss, he saw that the man stood upright like one of the room’s furnishings as if saying ‘it’s of no concern to me’.

“Um, for now, I want to ask you the reason why I was summoned…”

“Muu! You don’t have to use formal words, you know?”

“Well, for some reason, that’s kind of..”

Just because the person in question permits it, it didn’t mean that the surrounding people would accept it in the same way.

Even if the princess has no bad intentions, since there was an observer there as well, it would be troublesome for him if someone later said he acted too familiar.

“Well, there’s no helping it if Shin said so. Now then, the reason why I invited you today, I think you may already heard it from Barlux, but it’s the matter of the Skull Face. It was the one that was level 359 and wielded this.”

As she said that, Rionne opened a huge case that was located under her feet.

‘Wasn’t that a job for a maid?’ was what Shin thought, but unfortunately, there wasn’t a single maid in that room. Incidentally, there wasn’t even any tea prepared.

What Rionne took out was the greatsword, which had belonged to the Skull Face that Shin had previously defeated. It should be too heavy for a woman, but Rionne lifted it with one hand like it was nothing.

“…That is certainly the one the Skull Face had at that time. I remember the decoration and the aura covering the blade.”

Because it was a pretty memorable opponent, he also remembered its weapon well. Secretly, he activated his 『Appraisal』skill, which he forgot to do so during the battle. For the first time in here, Shin found out that it was a《Legend》grade greatsword. There was an inscription on it too which seemed to say 'Muspelm'.

"Yea, the Skull Face had considerable skill, I believe?"

"That's right. If my weapon was a bit more fragile, I think I wouldn't have been able to do anything but run away."

"It was able to rally with this greatsword that's equivalent to our country's treasured sword,『Wazamono』, huh?"

She may have heard the story about how the sword『Several Stroke』, which Shin had equipped at that time, had become only a hilt.

As for『Muspelm』, it was a 2 mels sword with a thick blade. If the other sword was not as good as『Wazamono』, it would be unthinkable for it to be able to exchange blows directly.

"I obtained that katana by chance in the middle of my journey. I think its performance was at least《Rare》grade though."

Actually, it was only a reinforced《Normal》grade katana, but Shin lied because he didn't know what the value of a maximum reinforced weapon was in this world.

As for the matter of whether or not it was possible for a《Rare》grade to exchange blows with『Muspelm』, it should be believable since it ended up getting broken from the excessive force.

“So now you’re just using an ordinary weapon, Shin?”

“No, I received an escort request towards Beirun earlier and we exterminated some bandits on the way. Since one of the bandits was using a Magic Sword as a weapon, I’m using that now.”

As for the bandits’ belongings, the property rights basically moved to whoever subdued them.

Since it’s possible that his current weapon would be examined, he used that excuse to add credibility to his story.

“I see. If it’s a Magic Sword, then it may be a good fit for you.”

“It’s good if that’s the case. But I’ve almost never used it after I obtained it, so I can’t say for sure.”

“You can get used to it, right?”

“Probably.”

Right, this is the flow of events that usually precedes a fight.

Shin exchanged words with Rionne while thinking that. The weapon from the monster, in addition, the monster’s skills—though it took the flow of a natural conversation, if combat-related talk continued in this way, it was obvious that the final result would be “Let’s have a match.”

“Fumu…”

“……?”

Against his expectations, Rionne who nodded once, fell silent.

As for Shin, he had the hesitant reaction of a ‘What should I do?’ decision.

“Well, is something wrong?”

“No, well, you are different after all, Shin.”

“Different?”

Shin couldn’t figure out the flow of the conversation, so the question was reiterated.

“Adventurers that suddenly stand out like you, are usually Chosen Ones. Though Gadras was like that too, when it was judged that his ability ranked in the upper class, it was customary for him to be invited to the royal palace.”

“Well, that’s understandable.”

“However, there are groups who use Chosen Ones to attempt assassinations from the inside.”

“…That’s also dangerous, right?”

‘Then, is it fine to suddenly let me meet the princess?’ Shin wanted to ask.

But, he didn’t interject because she wasn’t finished with her story.

“Though I had my suspicions about you, I thought it would probably be fine.”

“Eh? I don’t remember having said anything that would clear myself from doubt though.”

“Of course, it’s because of my intuition.”

“Ehh —”

A monotone sound came out unintentionally.

That too, seemed like it couldn’t be helped. Shin had never heard of someone determining whether an opponent might bring harm to the country by relying solely on intuition. What would she do if it hadn’t worked out?

“Ah, a monotone sound came out!”

“That can’t be helped. Moreover, if it’s like this, people won’t be convinced by such things since there is no concrete evidence.”

“No problem. I have the [Intuition] skill. I was born with it and my intuition never misses a thing. Besides, even though I may appear this way, I am one of this country’s princesses. I’ve developed my ability to judge character!”

With a smile, Rionne’s words were heard by Shin and he tried to recall the effect for [Intuition].

It should only be a battle support skill. If anything, he had a feeling that it was suitable to say it was just a woman’s intuition.

(…Could [Intuition] possibly enhance a woman’s intuition?)

Shin unconsciously wondered about such a thing.

“You might say the biggest deciding factor is that you hold a letter of introduction from Tsuki no Hokora.”

“Right…”

Under the current situation, it was the strongest piece of identification.

“That letter of introduction is impossible to replicate and Schnee-dono would never hand it over to a group plotting an assassination. As for a letter of introduction carrier, it’s almost certain that their theft countermeasures are not ordinary. Therefore, a story of someone stealing a letter of introduction is unheard of until this very day. In fact, this acted as something like a final confirmation.”

“I see, then the main question is?”

“So it’s come to this. Let me say it without beating about the bush. I want you to fight with me!”

“Not that, princess! You’re supposed to tell him about government service!”

Gadras promptly interrupted Rionne who had challenged Shin for a match.

Somehow, this turned out differently from their briefing session.

“What are you talking about, Gadras? Either way, for his true ability, how can I judge it accurately if we don’t cross swords?”

“Even if you yearn for it, you could wait a bit longer before saying it. What kind of place is it for a princess to challenge an adventurer with something like, ‘Fight with me!’?”

“A lady-like princess is the elder sister’s responsibility!”

“R-Responsibility…”

Gadras seemed to have it hard with one thing or another.

“Since it’s the wish of the princess, I don’t want to decline, but if possible I would like to ask for a weapon used for training purposes.”

Though Shin’s weapon was not lacking, still, it was unclear as to how long it would be able to keep up a rally directly with a 《Legend》 grade weapon.

“Okay, I understand. I’ll lend you a weapon used by our knights. It doesn’t matter if you destroy it.”

“Well, that’s fine. Though, I want you to forgive me if that sword breaks in the middle of the fight.”

While saying that, Shin kept secret about the even more dangerous items that lay in his Item Box.

“Then, let’s head toward the training ground immediately.”

The princess began to walk triumphantly.

Contrary to her personality, she walked elegantly without pause. If one only saw her movement, everyone would think that she had a graceful character.

Without taking the huge case, she held the『Muspelm』in one hand.

“Princess…”

“…It’s tough, isn’t it?”

“You understand?”

Shin felt sorry for Gadras who dropped his shoulders.

◆◆◆◆

Shortly after Shin and the others left the room.

Feyzel, who had remained in the room, let the tension out of his shoulders as he felt the presence of Shin and the others go away.

He seemed to be tense and before he noticed it, he felt that his muscles had become quite stiff. He took a deep breath and felt somewhat better after taking a short break.

“I’m so tired.”

Other than Feyzel, a male’s voice suddenly echoed through the room that should contain nobody else.

“Yeah, indeed.”

Feyzel, who began to talk, replied without any surprise. The owner of the voice was Feyzel’s co-worker.

“Are you feeling nervous about the other party as well?”

“Yeah, as expected from a letter of introduction carrier.”

A slightly tired smile appeared as Feyzel answered.

Feyzel's role was to obtain the other party's information with his own skills.

"You saw it, didn't you?"

"I saw it. But perhaps, his stats might be falsified."

That person was the most abnormal among all of the people who had come in so far. Feyzel continued, and waited for a response from the owner of the voice.

"To that extent?"

"I'm sure about it. That person, named Shin, has a level of 200. Job of samurai. However, if I were to really say my impressions of when we faced each other, I would have rewritten the information."

Feyzel was a Chosen One that specialized in uncovering the ability of the other party, therefore he was sure of it.

Rionne and Gadras didn't notice the abilities of Shin, but Feyzel felt exactly a fragment of the power leaking out from his body. In fact, the right answer was beyond the level he stated.

"Though I failed to obtain any sufficient information, I can only say this. He is strong! Even more so than we imagined."

"Since you say it to that extent, I should report this matter to the King."

"Please do so if possible, I'd be saved the trouble if you convey it. Also, don't make any needless trouble, I guess? Like what you did

to Wilhelm, if you make a foolish move, it will be terrible. At least, I don't want to fight him."

"Understood. I must not make an enemy of an upper class Chosen One."

By the end of those words, the voice was already inaudible.

Apparently, it seemed to have gone to report.

"Good grief! I want to go home today already!"

I feel like I am dead instead of living.

Muttering so, Feyzel left the room.

◆◆◆◆

Part 3.

Shin, Rionne and Gadras visited the training grounds that the knights used.

"I want to confirm something. For the time being, we're not going to fight next to soldiers that are training, are we?"

"No, it won't go well if we were to fight there. Today, half of the soldiers are out for practice and the rest have other work that's not in the training ground. Though some may sneak a peek, it can't helped with so many people. Or, is Shin the type that does not want to be seen by people when he fights?"

“To tell you the truth, I want to refrain from exposing my abilities expressly. At the guild, we fought in an empty training center.”

“I see, you’re a cautious one, aren’t you?”

“Isn’t that how an adventurer should be?”

Unlike knights, adventurers often traveled alone. And in case of emergencies, they would have one or two trump cards prepared, Shin thought.

“Well, if I had to say it, most adventurers try to show off their power to gain fame. If their talent is recognized, then they can also enter government service like me.”

Gadras, who was a former adventurer, answered Shin’s question.

“That’s how it is, huh?”

“Of course there are also guys like you who don’t reveal their hand and hide their trump cards.”

Although it didn’t seem to be unusual, somehow people like Shin appeared to be in the minority.

“Personally, I don’t prefer the types like Shin. People who think that they can act that way, even if they’re powerful, I don’t like them for some reason. By simply having power, you must think about how to properly use it.”

“The obligations of a person with power, huh?”

“It’s the duty of the strong. When I notice a strong person with power, I often think, ‘What kind of influence does their power have on themselves and their surroundings?’ Even though what I hope to see doesn’t always happen.”

“Since I’m from the royal family, I’d say that I tend to think that way”, Rionne continued and smiled wryly.

From the beginning, for royalty, their existence would significantly affect people with their actions. In some ways it could even be said that both royalty and chosen ones were somewhat similar.

That was why Rionne was taught by the royal family to live the ideal life of a person with power. At the same time, she also noticed the existence of the unreachable status known as a princess.

She felt obligated to fight and swung her sword day and night, to control her power. She learned more about military knowledge than etiquette or her studies. Looking at her hand, which held the sword, no one would ever think that that was the hand of the country’s princess.

“It’s difficult, isn’t it?”

“Though I’m telling you about someone else’s problems, I guess even you can commiserate, huh, Shin?”

“It’s because I don’t serve the country, isn’t it? Again, I have my own way of doing things as an adventurer. Besides, it’s tiring to

think about such things around the clock, so I do everything moderately. If not, then you won't feel relaxed, right?"

Shin didn't mean to deny Rionne's thoughts.

In fact, it was important to act with such thinking in mind. However, different people have their own viewpoints and capabilities. If there was a person who had their own way, without noticing it existed, there would also be a person who acted their own way and yet noticed it existed.

As for what would happen as a result, only God may know. Of course, it was unreasonable for Shin to entrust everything to the heavens, so he moved and thought accordingly. Whether or not it went smoothly, it was hard to say.

"I'm a bit jealous, for you to be able to say that."

"Well, when something bad happens, the troublesome ones usually don't change though"

"If you enter the military, you may be able to decrease the troublesome things a little, you know? Though I can't say it will be as a General, I can promise you a reasonably high position."

"An additional bonus comes along in various other ways instead, huh? I'm terribly sorry, but I'll still have to decline."

Shin evaded the casual invitation from the second princess smoothly.

He didn't have any intention to enter a military which would restrict his movements. For Shin, who lived in a world without a

class system such as nobles and royal families, their ideas were beyond his understanding.

Although he was familiar with the meaning of a fantasy system in games and manga, he didn't understand it in this world.

"That's too bad. It's not easy to encounter an upper grade Chosen One. So, it seems like we've arrived?"

Rionne shrugged while stating her disappointment, she probably thought that Shin would have agreed.

And then, she stopped in front of a somewhat ordinary door.

"Here?"

"This is because you requested a fight that no one will see. So we will borrow this place."

Saying that, Rionne pushed the door open.

Inside, there was a transition point similar to what Shin saw in the adventurers' guild. (T/N: metastasis point had been changed to transition point)

"So we are going to teleport?"

"That's right. Didn't you also do so in the guild?"

Their destination, after transferring right away, was a round open space about 100 mels in radius. It was different from the place where Shin fought against Barlux.

“It’s constructed differently from the guild’s training ground, huh?”

“It’s been said to be made with a battle between Chosen Ones in mind. Besides, there’s no one here so we can fight as much as we want. Actually, even if you didn’t say anything, I was planning to fight you here anyway, Shin.”

Although it was a test of strength, even if a chosen one used only a ‘tiny’ portion of their power, there was no guarantee that this ‘tiny’ amount would be the same amount as that of an ordinary soldier. But, it seemed this place would be alright, if that was the case.

“It was decided, huh?”

“I couldn’t find any other place for our purpose, except this. The transition point is a technique from before the Dusk of the Majesty, and we haven’t been able to completely solve it yet. What was it made for? To tell you the truth, it’s not known yet. But it’s pretty sturdy, so it’s thought to have been a training ground in the past.”

I see, Shin thought.

He thought it was strange because he was told that transposing magic was lost, but a transition point had been set up here like it was perfectly normal. To manufacture a transition point, the technique of transposing was needed.

(Hmm…I wonder if this place was for some guild house originally.)

If one said guild in this world, it would usually refer to an adventurers' guild.

However, there were many players guilds and their corresponding guild houses that existed during the game era. The structures and styles varied according to the guild. Some made castle, while others used a shop. There were no similar guild houses.

And, a transition point was standard equipment for a guild house. As for the royal magic library that Shin had visited before, the unusually high level barrier skill was understandable, if it too was installed by a guild. Perhaps, that was also just equipment repurposed from a guild.

"Let's begin now. First, you should choose a weapon of your liking. Do you need a change of clothes?"

"No, they're fine as is."

Just like the match with Barlux, they didn't battle immediately.

Several mels ahead of Shin, there were swords and spears that were previously prepared. It could be said that they were used for training because they were made from iron and had edgeless blades. However, if it was swung with the strength of a chosen one, the damage inflicted may not be small.

"Then, I'll take this."

Shin chose a standard one-handed sword from among the weapons.

It was maintained properly, but its quality was not so good because it was for training. As for Rionne, she chose a thick-bladed greatsword. The blade was almost 2 mels in length, similar to『Muspelm』, and she swung it around like a branch from a tree.

“When I see that in person, something feels out of place.”

Such a thing would never happen if it was in the game.

It was different if it was a monster, but the scene of a sword that was about the height of a body, being swung by a woman’s slender arm was very strange to see in reality.

Speaking of the person in question, it seemed like she intended to warm-up. Shin heard the sound of air being cut through every time the greatsword was brandished. Since it’s no use to keep watching forever, Shin too, lightly swung his sword and relaxed his body. With their preparations completed, they got ready with their weapons in the center of the training ground.

“This is a fight to check your ability, so I’ll let out some of my power to an extent!”

“Please go easy on me.”

Shin replied with a wry smile, to Rionne who was fully motivated.

Gadras played the role of referee. Points would be given to each of them, and if he judged the blow would cause a fatal injury he would end the match.

Of course, even if it was said to be a fatal injury, they would stop just before the blow landed. After all, with the ability of these two people, doing that would be a piece of cake.

“Alright, let’s begin!”

Rionne stepped forward when Gadras shouted.

With her greatsword on her right shoulder, she approached Shin using the most direct path, with Shin doing the same. Facing against the greatsword coming from a diagonal direction, Shin prepared to swing his sword from his waist. If he rallied directly, there’s no doubt that Shin’s sword, which was inferior in strength, would break. Thus, he aimed to strike at the flat part of the greatsword.

Ting! A high-pitched sound was made when Rionne’s greatsword veered away from Shin. Furthermore, in one step, Shin leaped toward Rionne’s chest. However, in the next moment, the heel of Rionne’s boot appeared in front of Shin’s eyes.

“Whoa!”

Shin bent down right away to dodge the unleashed kick.

Her released fist was also evaded as she continued the attack before taking a distance once more. Then, her hand, which had parted with the intercepted greatsword, started to counterattack with martial arts. As for the greatsword, the downward force may have been great, as it pierced the ground diagonally.

“You avoided my attacks without being flustered, huh? I thought I could somewhat surprise you with that though”

“Well, I am surprised. I didn’t expect you would suddenly throw away your weapon and start to fight hand-to-hand.”

He didn’t say that parting with one’s own weapon has never happened during battle, but it was not usually done immediately after a battle started.

If an ordinary adventurer did something like that, they would be cut down in no time. There was a limit to making unorthodox decisions.

“You can still say that even though you dodged it like it was nothing. However, the next one will not be so easy!”

The greatsword was pulled from the ground, and Rionne took her stance again.

That stance was indeed magnificent. It was the posture of someone who had been training without depending too much on their ability as a Chosen One.

“I’ll go from here!”

Saying so, Shin faced Rionne and shortened their distance.

As for the current Shin, some restrictions were put on his stats based on information from Girard. Because of the restriction ability [Limit], his STR and AGI were about 500. If he rallied with Rionne who was an upper class Chosen One, it should be fine.

Shin, with the momentum from hurling himself, plunged into and pushed Rionne's greatsword with his sword's brim.

"Going to compete with me in strength, huh, Shin?"

"I'm confident in my strength!"

As the weapons made a grinding sound, Shin and Rionne exchanged words.

And then, Rionne stopped pushing Shin's sword. Apparently, in response to Shin's words, Rionne decided to accept his strength challenge with a contest.

Rionne put power in her slender arm, and the locking of sword to sword started. If she took her time, she may be able to overcome the resistance, but it was obvious that Rionne would take measures before that.

(She is on par with 500 STR, huh? As expected of Girard, he guessed correctly.)

As for the stats of an upper class Chosen One, Girard had talked about it being around 500.

"I wonder if our strength is equal?"

"It seems like it."

They made some distance between them by stepping back together.

Shin had his sword in an aiming-at-the-eyes stance, and Rionne was in an overhead sword posture.

“You may use skills too. No need to be reserved, Shin.”

“Well, if you insist.”

Rionne and Shin, both used the support system martial arts skill [Spirit Manipulation • Katsusen].

Shin moved his sword to the left side of his waist from his previous posture, took his stance with his left hand on the sword’s blade near the hilt and lowered his posture. It was a quick draw stance, but without the sheath.

Rionne on the other hand, stayed there without changing her posture. From Shin’s point of view, he saw the aura that covered Rionne’s body sharpen.

The strengthening effect from the support system martial arts skill was calculated based on the stats during its usage, so there was almost no difference of strengthening ability between Rionne and Shin under the current conditions. If there was, it was simply the difference between ability.

Swish!

Shin moved first.

The distance between them was shortened by his sliding feet. And then, just one step from Rionne, Shin jumped into her territory by sliding on the ground.

Though it could not be said that it was his normal form, the sword that was charging towards Rionne was at a speed difficult to see by an ordinary person.

Without turning her eyes to that attack, Rionne also swung the greatsword downward. Due to the explosion of her sharpened spirit, it accelerated instantaneously. And that speed exceeded Shin's attack.

Shin would likely die if he received that blow directly, so as the greatsword approached from above his head, by putting his strength into his left foot, he bent himself backward and evaded it.

Rionne, who had just swung down her greatsword, couldn't move right away because of the weight of her weapon.

From there, Shin did a horizontal kick, but Rionne crouched down and evaded it.

Shoom!

With her body twisted as she tripped, although she had just evaded Shin's kick and stood only on one foot, she still didn't stop attacking.

Without losing any centrifugal force from pulling out the greatsword from the ground, she turned once more. The force of her tripping was converted into power for swinging her greatsword.

With the sound of air being cut, she returned the favor and aimed at Shin who just drew a horizontal kick. Shin, who was just slightly above the ground, kicked the ground again to escape from the greatsword.

Rionne suddenly stopped the greatsword, which was gaining momentum, as soon as she thought the blow would come out of place. Even though the centrifugal force was strong, Rionne didn't break her posture. It seemed her being a close-combat type Chosen One was not just for show.

(Somehow just now, I felt like I was gonna die if I didn't avoid it.)

Though there was no killing intent, Shin didn't think he would escaped unharmed if he received Rionne's greatsword to his head. When he saw Rionne's movement just now, he understood that she stopped the blow just before that. However, when he saw the greatsword pierce and stick into the ground, he couldn't get rid of his anxiety.

In his current condition, Shin didn't want to risk restricting his defence-related stats. When the world was still a game, not even a scratch would be there if he received a blow from a greatsword. However, Shin didn't have the courage to try it now with his own flesh.

"Apparently, it seems our types are similar, Shin. Our reaction speed is about the same too."

"That's right. This is getting hard to settle, how about we call it an end it here?"

"Is that so? I want to fight a little longer though."

Rionne was like a deflated balloon.

“Since it was a sword for training purposes, it’s hard to know how far I can put my strength into it. Besides, Rionne-sama’s sword has also bent.”

“Muu! This one couldn’t last either.”

The swords for training purpose couldn’t endure Shin and Rionne’s power.

As proof, about 30 cemels from the sword guard of Rionne’s greatsword was bent almost into the shape of the character ‘へ’. It was pretty admirable that it didn’t break.

Shin’s sword had also deformed, a part of it had cracked when it had rallied with the greatsword.

“At least we were able to properly understand each other’s strength, Rionne-sama.”

“Isn’t that good? His strength is even equal to yours, Princess. Moreover, that speedy reaction. It’s plenty enough for me.”

“It’s not good to force the subject too much, huh? All right. Let’s stop the match here. You have my gratitude for going along with my selfishness.”

Gadras, who saw the their battle situation unfolding, gave some timely support to help end the match.Gadras realized by intuition that it would be bad if he let them ‘heat up’ as it was. Although Gadras was also a Chosen One who was near the upper class and therefore was able to follow the two people offense and

defense with his eyes, he still couldn't be sure that he would be able to react in time if he entered their ranges.

Not much time had passed since the match began, so he urged them to stop fighting. He had already decided that Shin was not an average Chosen One when Shin could keep up with Rionne's movement. It was not difficult to even judge him to be an upper class Chosen One.

"Well then, let's return. You should put the sword back where it originally was."

"Okay."

Shin put back the one-handed sword which was already unusable.

He thought the sword was lacking before the fight began. It was already fortunate that it didn't break on the first rally. Perhaps the angle in which they rallied was good, he guessed.

"By the way, I want to ask something."

"What is it?"

"Why did you bring the Skull Face's sword?"

Because she brought it to the training ground like it was natural, Shin thought it was strange since it was decided they would use a training sword.

"Though this is a completely different matter, when a man proposes to a woman in Bayreuth kingdom, it's customary to present a sword."

“…Again, isn’t that————————dangerous!”

Shin muttered in a way that was not heard by Rionne.

Is that what it’s for? It’s the thing used to cut “it” off one has an affair? Shin suspected without any reason.

“The reason is, in case they are caught cheating, they will be cut by the sword. It’s only a formality for now though.”

“…Are you for real?”

It seemed his suspicion was right.

Will the cheating mistress get punished too? Trivial questions appeared in Shin’s mind.

“Because of that, to be honest, although the sword pierced and was stuck in the wall of my bedroom, I’ve considered it as a present for me.”

“T-That, isn’t that too unreasonable?!”

“Not a problem. If I did that, the sword would become mine legally.”

“I didn’t see that coming! What a scheme!?”

Rionne showed her playfulness, but as a matter of fact, since there was no weapon that could match Rionne’s strength, it seems her primary focus was on the matter of the greatsword.

A weapon that could endure the power of an upper class Chosen One was not easy to find in this world. Even if it was found, it was most likely owned by skilled adventurers or famous knights.

Only the treasured sword that symbolizes the country was able to endure all of the energy from Rionne in Bayreuth kingdom. However, Rionne couldn't take out the treasured sword every time, so she seemed to have been racking her brain on how to remedy the situation.

Because the Skull Face's greatsword was not lacking in durability, didn't have curses and so on, it seemed to have been secretly prepared for her given her circumstances.

At the same time, she had been thinking of various scenarios just in case someone came forward claiming it as the owner.

"Just to confirm, by any chance, am I supposed to propose to Rionne-sama?"

"Yea, you're supposed to because you gave me the sword."

"About the blown off greatsword matter, it really was just accidental…"

"I know. I don't mean to push the matter either. Although it would be reassuring if Shin serves the country, I get absolutely nothing out of offending you so badly that you moved to another country. It's promising if an upper class Chosen One becomes an ally, but it's extremely troublesome if they become an enemy. If possible, I would like you to refrain from entering government service at another country, but this is up to your discretion."

"For the moment, I don't have any such plans."

“However, a person that’s not affiliated with any place can be scary. Because, what they will do is unpredictable. And there are many people who dislike that sort of person, you know?”

Although an upper class Chosen One was an individual, one of them was comparable to an army.

For this reason, they were terrifying when they were unaffiliated.

“For the time being, I belong to the adventurers’ guild.”

“If you’re afraid of the penalty, I can withdraw you from there immediately. Well, ever since the guild has revealed that Shin has a ‘letter of introduction’, people with impertinent thoughts have been suppressed.”

“Really? Since I showed it to the guard at the gate, I thought that was how I was exposed and that’s how it reached the guild.”

“Of course, the information was obtained from there. Only, when showing it to the guard, the possibility of it being an imitation is not zero. However, the story is different when the master of an adventurers’ guild acknowledges it. Because he has the method to distinguish the real thing. If Shin has been acknowledged, additional confirmation of his status is preferable for those people, I guess?”

“Indeed, I think so too. Or rather, what are those people who have impertinent ideas trying to do?”

Though he had some idea of what to expect, Shin asked anyway.

“They want to arrest you as a criminal because of the sword that pierced my bedroom, and make you serve the country, little by little, as restitution.”

“…Well, even though I didn’t do it on purpose, it wouldn’t be strange if someone had died when I misstepped, right?”

Having it only pierce a wall was entirely the result of good luck.

“That’s right, I guess the Skull Face which caused it may have been a unique individual? If it is, then it’s not a situation where you could ease up. I don’t know how much harm it would have caused if you had let it go as it was. At that time, most adventurers would not be able to take on a unique individual, so the damage would have kept on accumulating until the information was gathered. Therefore I’d like to thank you instead.”

“Sigh, for the time being, it’s good that I’m not considered a criminal since it would make it difficult to move around.”

“Fufufu, is this really okay? You can ask me for a favor you know?”

“I don’t have the courage to ask for a favor from the royal family. And so, how’s this story connected to the greatsword in the end?”

“Oh, that’s because this has been formally handed over to me.”

As she said that, Rionne lifted the case that contained Muspelm.

“Umm, in regards to the matter Rionne-sama mentioned just now, is it because the greatsword already belongs to you?”

“Because the owner had appeared in this way, thus I thought about a different method if I could not be engaged. In the first place, to forcibly place a present under my control, even though I also wanted to make the sword mine, the main reason is to prevent it from falling into the hands of the aforementioned impertinent guys.”

“Doing something like that is completely useless.”

“I won’t deny that.”

The higher-ups didn’t seem to be monolithic too.

When looking closely at the privileged class called the nobles, there may be a rotten part that exists.

“So in other words, having decided the greatsword was a present, without an engagement, Rionne-sama formally obtained a powerful weapon, and I can avoid any meddling from the country, huh?”

“Naturally, I’ll fully take out from my personal assets to compensate for the price of the sword. And I also understand perfectly that this one is worth more than I can afford. But, please, sell it to me!”

The last sentence was an entreaty.

She may have been depressed because she had never had a weapon that could bring out her potential. Was how Shin thought, and desperation could be felt from Rionne.

True power couldn't be demonstrated if there was no weapon that corresponded to their ability. Rionne seemed to understand that.

"I only want to continue being an adventurer in the same manner as before, so if there is no further meddling from the country, that would be good as a condition. However, if possible, I want to enter the restricted zone in the royal magic library though."

"Is that really all? You don't have to hold yourself back."

According to the common sense of this world, it could be said that it was impossible to have dealings for a weapon of《Legend》grade.

"For now, it's information that I want, not money. Unlike a weapon, I can't get information, somehow or other, even if I take out money."

"Though I also understand that…Fumu, how should I say this, you have no greed, Shin."

Rionne said as she was a little astounded.

Certainly, information was sometimes worth more than gold. However, information that was equal to a《Legend》grade weapon was not common. Even though Rionne has visited the

zone that required reading permission, what kind of information does Shin seek? She had no idea at all.

“The one that defeated the Skull Face is Shin. Though it became complicated due to the place where it pierced, the property rights are originally Shin’s. With one of these, you could probably obtain a large sum of money to live the rest of your life without having to work. On the other hand, this sword is something that I don’t know if I could obtain even if I piled up money. If you hand it over without any reservations, I’ll be suspicious that you have ulterior motives.”

“That’s just how much I value information.”

Rionne conjectured that there was some kind of special meaning in Shin’s words.

However, she didn’t voice her guess, because she didn’t want to pursue it there.

“Then, Rionne-sama, it’s a deal?”

“Of course. To tell you the truth, I have used this greatsword several times already and I have grown accustomed to having it in my hand.”

“……”

The only thought in your head is of obtaining that sword after all, was what Shin didn’t say.

She didn't know that she could have requisitioned it even without informing Shin, so he was able to maintain a good impression of her since it was properly negotiated for.

If Shin could get through this without any meddlesome discussions, then a greatsword of《Legend》grade was a cheap price to pay.

"I'll have your library permit delivered later, where are you staying?"

"It's an inn called Bear Point Pavilion, in the west district."

"Understood. Gadras, make the arrangements."

"Roger that"

When Rionne talked, Gadras, who had remained silent until now, answered.

"Shin-dono. For this matter, please accept my thanks. It seems like the princess will finally be able to fight without reservation now."

"No, there's no need for thanks. It was a mutually beneficial deal. Next, I want to confirm something, it's about those people with overzealous ideas. In case I have any problems in the future, may I repel them?"

"In regards to that, just act without any reservations, but also please be careful. I would like to think that there aren't any more fools who would try to threaten an upper class Chosen One, but

guys like that, will usually not heed any inconveniences that their actions would cause to themselves."

Gadras strongly agreed.

The reason being if anyone did so, they would most likely be punished.

"It's happened before?"

"Yes. There is a powerful person that had been acknowledged as an upper class Chosen One before, like Shin, but some fools held that person's relative as hostage and tried to make him obey them."

"…Can I speak my thoughts freely?"

"Please speak without reservation."

"That's stupid."

"You'd think so? By the way, as for the nobles, all of them were killed, from the main culprit to the perpetrators. Their mansion was completely destroyed too. No mercy for those meddling guys. However, there is no evidence that the person in question did it himself."

"Oh my god!"

They seemed to have received a suitable retribution.

By the way, it appeared to the public that the kingdom's army had subdued the nobles who were going to start a revolt.

“Well, well, I’m fine with acting how I normally do, so I’d like to request your help if it happens.”

“Indeed, I’m no princess, but I’ll exert my power too.”

Gadras firmly nodded again.

Next to him, Rionne too seemed to say, “Leave it to me”, as she nodded. Though some people may prefer to handle things themselves, having a royal family member as an ally was still great. Shin had decided to just report if there was a bad noble.

“That’s right. Don’t return home too soon, because those overbearing guys are noisy. Let’s have a tea break. Can you tell me about the story of the Skull Face in question?”

“If it’s that much, it’s fine I guess.”

Shin replied to Rionne with a nod.

When Shin and the rest returned to the castle using the transition point, someone was already in the room.

It was a petite man, a little over middle-aged, who approached them. If one looked at the cassock of the priest, it was mainly white and blue, and he had the air of someone who was a high-rank.

If something peculiar could be stated about that man, it was that he was fiddling with the control panel of the transition point without taking notice of Rionne.

As there were a lot of exit destinations for a transition point, the destination could be specified with the control panel. There was no such action when Shin fought against Barlux before in the adventurers' guild, and the training ground couldn't be entered without the guild master's authority, because the destination had been already fixed.

By the way, in a normal situation, when the guild master's authority wasn't invoked, it was only a training ground open to the public, so it was not made just for a Chosen One.

"Isn't that Cardinal Greyl? What is he doing?"

Rionne voiced her question.

Was he a mediator with the church? Shin looked at the man called cardinal. However, in the next moment, Shin's face stiffened due to the status display from Analyze.

————『Greyl Dulles　Level 161　Priest』

———— Endowment:【Charm・IV】【Confusion・III】

Those troublesome abnormal statuses couldn't be felt for real in the game era, but anyone would understand the real danger they would pose in this world that became reality.

And the person who was under two such abnormal statuses, was fiddling with the control panel of the transition point.

"He is affected by Charm and Confusion! Stop that person!"

Shin started running at the same time as he shouted.

However, Shin was late by just one step, as Greyl finished messing with the controls.

“Ugh!?”

Shin’s view effortlessly distorted.

When the discomfort that was not felt during a normal transition was over, the scene around Shin had completely changed.

◆◆◆◆

“…Is this for real?”

What extended throughout his surroundings was, in a word, ruins.

The crumbling houses and scattered remains denied the existence of dwellers. Shin tried to collect his surroundings for information through the support system skill[Clairvoyance], but because of a thin haze that faint magic could be felt from, his vision was obstructed from seeing far away.

There were many buildings that had avoided completely collapsing, but most had big holes in their walls, or their second floor was gone, which was unlikely due to any evidence of weathering.

Within the range of his view, there was the wreckage of broken glass and wagons. And, he was able to ascertain footprints that were clearly not from humans or horses.

“uu…What is happening?”

When Shin turned around, Rionne was standing nearby.

Gadras and Greyl were nowhere to be seen. Was it only Shin and Rionne that were transferred, or were the other two transferred to a different location? It couldn’t be determined by Shin currently.

“Apparently, we have been transferred somewhere. Does Rionne-sama know anything?”

“Transferred, huh…From that transition point, transferring to a place with ruins in this condition…Perhaps, no, it’s certainly the Sacred Place, Kalkia.”

“Don’t tell me, it’s the place that is said to be rampant with dangerous monsters?”

“Yes it is. They may have thought to get rid of us with the monsters here.”

Inside the Sacred Place, Rionne heard that strong monsters with levels higher than 500 roamed around. No matter how much Rionne was an upper class Chosen One, there was no guarantee that she would survive when she was thrown in without any kind of preparations. But, that would only be the case, if Shin was not beside her.

“Shin, are we the only ones here?”

“Yes. There is no one near us at least.”

“Then, it seems that only we have been transferred here. It’s not possible for one transition to transfer to multiple places.”

“In others words, Gadras-san remains on the other side, huh?”

It was good that not all of the members who were there in that room transposed.

“First of all, let’s move out from Kalkia. Can you use Mind Chat?”

“No, unfortunately I don’t have an adventurer card. How about you, Shin?”

“I have a companion who I can use it with. Just in case, besides Gadras-san, even if I tried to explain the present situation, will anyone believe it? To begin with, I don’t know if they would be able to convey a message for us.”

Though Shin didn’t want to announce that he could use Mind Chat, it was currently an emergency, so he told Rionne the truth.

If a commoner went to the castle, they would definitely be restricted at the gate. It was different if Schnee revealed her identity, but he didn’t intend to go that far.

If it was known that Shin was able to communicate directly with Schnee, he was certain that his treatment as an ordinary upper class Chosen One would be gone. He had the luxury of worring about these kinds of things, because as long as Shin was there, Rionne’s safety was secure.

“I want to know what happened on the other side. However, it’s hopeless if they couldn’t make it to the castle, huh? I guess Gadras will arrest Cardinal Greyl, so Shin doesn’t need to be troubled by it, I think.”

“I’m surprised too. I didn’t expect that a priest would have such dangerous abnormal statuses.”

If it was still a game, it would be impossible to manipulate an avatar’s behavior with abnormal status effects, but it seems like that wasn’t the case in this world.

At least, it was impossible for those who were affected by such status effects to maintain a proper mental condition. In addition, the timing. It was likely that they planned to target Shin and Rionne when they returned from their transposing.

“What’s going on…”

Shin muttered as he sighed lightly.

“I want to tell my companion a rendezvous point, do you know of any towns nearby?”

“If that’s the case, there is the fort city Balmel. It’s necessary to pass through that place, even if they head here or we head in the direction of Bayreuth.”

“Understood. I’ll tell my companion to meet us at Balmel.”

Shin thanked Rionne and he connected to Schnee via Mind Chat.

Within a few seconds, the nostalgic ringtone stopped, and Shin was aware of the sense being connected.

“(Ah, Schn——)”

“(SHIN! Where are you now!?)”

“(Uooo!?)”

Shin’s words were interrupted by Schnee’s loud voice, making him let out a strange sound. Furthermore, his body was hit with a *jolt*.

Speaking of Schnee, she noticed very quickly when Shin was transposed. Her voice didn’t seem like her usual tone, and her panicked state could be felt by Shin.

“(Are you alright!? Please answer me!)”

“(Wait, Schnee, calm down a little, I’m alright. I’ll explain what happened now. Again, I repeat, I’m okay.)”

Shin began to talk as calmly as possible.

After saying he was fine several times, Schnee finally showed signs of settling down.

“(I’m sorry. I’m fine now.)”

“(Then that’s good. Somehow panicking doesn’t seem like Schnee.)”

“(That is, again…that. I thought Shin had disappeared.)”

“(…My bad. I heard too much.)”

Even though Schnee seemed calm, her insecurity remained.

Maybe it’s because she was just recently reunited with Shin again that her insecurities were plainly visible. No matter how high-

level she was, even if her body was strong, Schnee was a woman, too. Even if her stats were high, it didn't mean that her heart was strong to that extent.

"(And so, where in the world are you? You don't seem to be within my perception range either.)"

"(Ah yes, I was in a training ground having a match with the second princess, but was forced to transpose when we returned to the castle.)"

"(Transposed? That explains why your presence disappeared suddenly.)"

"(I'm with the second princess right now. According to her, the place where we are is called Sacred Place Kalkia.)"

"(The Sacred Place can only be transitioned to from the royal castle, right?…However, if I'm not mistaken, the transition to there should be impossible without permission.)"

Schnee seemed to be aware about the transition point in the royal castle.

"(It was the old man called Cardinal Greyl that transposed us. Though the rank was low, he was suffering from the abnormal states of Charm and Confusion.)"

"(I see. If it's Cardinal Greyl, then choosing the Sacred Place to transpose to is possible. Still, Charm and Confusion, huh?)"

According to Schnee's story, Cardinal Greyl devoted himself to studying in the church in the Bayreuth kingdom, he seemed to be a person of deep faith so he rose to the position of cardinal.

As Shin expected, Cardinal Greyl served as the church's mediator and had been stationed in the king's castle for some time now. Worthy of someone who acquired [Purification] on his own, it could be said that his fighting power was quite good for an ordinary person.

From the short story that Shin heard, he understood well that it was unrelated to Charm and Confusion.

"(Was he asked to purify a cursed item but failed or something?)"

"(His actions were too precise for that. It'd be more logical to think that he was manipulated by someone, don't you agree?)"

When Shin gave one of the possibilities, Schnee denied it completely.

"(Then, do you have any ideas, Schnee?)"

"(As far as I know, nothing in particular that I remember. To begin with, the Skills of the mental interference group, like Charm and Confusion, are considered to be taboo. Just for having learnt it, one will be executed when caught, even if it's someone from the royal family.)"

"(Ah, so it's like that, huh?)"

Shin agreed with Schnee's words.

After all, a skill that manipulates a person's heart would be regarded as dangerous. Even the royal family was not immune to the punishment, as thorough enforcement was carried out without exception.

It was hard to believe that the user of such a skill or item would be serving the castle.

If that was the case, then——.

"(There is a hidden one.)"

"(Yes, I think so too.)"

Similar words appeared in the minds of Shin and Schnee.

It was the given name of an antagonist who differs from the original 7 races in this world.

"(I cannot return at once. It may be bad, but I'll leave it to you, okay?)"

He had a skill to use transposing. However, if it was known that he could use magic that was said to be lost, Rionne would not let him get away, no matter what happens.

"(No problem. It's a good opportunity to teach Tiera too.)"

"(Thank you.)"

"(Please leave it to me. I'll tell the matter about the princess to the King.)"

If it was Schnee, it would be easy to come into contact with the King without being noticed by anyone.

If she somehow conveyed that the princess was safe, the confusion would be settled. In that situation, the person lying hidden in the castle should find it difficult to move.

“(Then, I’ll contact you about the results later. What about the meeting place?)”

“(Balmel will do. It seems you need to go through there, so let’s meet there.)”

“(Affirmative.)”

After detailed decisions were made, the Mind Chat was cut.

Shin decided to leave the Bayreuth matter to Schnee, and turned around toward Rionne again.

Chapter 3.

Part 1.

Schnee, who cut off the Mind Chat with Shin, went into action immediately.

She seemed to be very anxious when Shin’s presence disappeared half a day after going into the castle, but she regained her usual composure right away.

“Kuu?”

“What’s wrong?” Yuzuha asked, and the situation was briefly explained.

“Kuu! Yuzuha hates that!”

Precisely because Yuzuha's partner got involved, and because it personally had been affected by miasma before, Yuzuha wouldn't allow the existence of the enemy*. (T/N: This will be explained later.)

With Yuzuha perched on her shoulder, Schnee went into town from the inn. Though passersby stopped walking, being fascinated by Schnee's pretty face, nobody recognized her because she was disguised by a magic skill.

Avoiding those who didn't know their places gracefully, Schnee arrived at the place where Tiera was in no time. When she opened the door to the entrance, fragrances that she never smelled in daily life lingered in the air. Apparently, it was a shop that dealt with alchemy-related products. Items, which would become special catalysts, like leaves with poisonous-looking colors or some kind of dried things, were side-by-side.

Tiera was in the corner where various types of paper lined up, and she was eagerly comparing them.

"Tiera. Tiera?"

"……"

Apparently, Tiera was quite focused on it.

Even when Schnee called out to her, Tiera didn't respond at all. Because it couldn't be helped, Schnee lightly tapped her shoulder and called out her name close to her ear.

"…Tiera?"

“Hyaaa!!?”

Tiera was probably surprised, suddenly hearing a voice so close to her ear.

She jumped in response.

“M-Master. Please don’t startle me like that.”

“Though it’s good to concentrate, pay attention to your surroundings. You didn’t even notice when I was calling you earlier.”

“Uhh, I’m sorry.”

Tiera apologized while hanging her head.

Somehow, her long ears also seemed to face the ground.

“Never mind. Tiera, although this may be difficult for you, there has been an urgent business that has come up and you need to accompany me from now on.”

“Urgent business?”

“Yes, it’s about the King’s castle.”

The King’s castle, Tiera understood it, was not a place she could go.

If she was still at Tsuki no Hokora, she certainly would have retorted in a loud voice. However, because of Shin and his actions, she was not surprised by a thing of such degree.

“…I’m starting to get used to these situations that happen while accompanying Master.”

‘As expected from Master, you and Shin are certainly the same’, agreed Tiera as she thought to herself.

“It’s not a story to explain in here. Let’s go outside.”

“Understood.”

Tiera obediently followed Schnee who turned back towards the street.

It wasn’t a problem for Tiera, since she had no intention of buying anything in particular.

While walking on the road that lead to the King’s castle, Schnee explained the situation.

“…So in other words, I will have to defeat ‘it’ from now on?”

“That’s how it appears. Because you have reached the point where you can go outside, there’s no guarantee that you wouldn’t get involved with ‘it’. There are no documents or rumours about ‘it’, and it’s better if you understand ‘it’ by yourself.”

‘It’ was different from the monsters that attack people for food or to protect their territory. ‘It’ was different from the thief who steals items and money. ‘It’ was the antagonist who afflicts and entraps people.

“It’s a perfect chance for Tiera to learn about the existence of demons.”

——Demon.

Was a monster said to be born from miasma.

It was greatly different from other monsters, because it was not subjected to ability restriction at the place where miasma accumulated; instead it was strengthened. Again, in the demon's area, the transmogrification of monsters were also accelerated by miasma and in the areas affected by it; the presence of demons increased the degree of difficulty.

Normally, when a monster was affected by the miasma, it was difficult for them to keep their sanity.

It may be possible for a high-level monster, but low-level monsters are hardly able to resist transmogrification. Monsters that change appearance have the word 'Invade' added to their names. Then, it becomes an existence that attacks surrounding living beings indiscriminately.

The change of the appearance was assumed to happen when the body of the monster, which was born from demon essence, was replaced by miasma. Thus, the monster's appearance didn't revert back to its original form even if the miasma was cleared away. Was it because the monsters, which couldn't distinguish between ally and enemy, were affected by miasma? There were a lot of them that followed the demon.

Also the miasma, besides affecting monsters, inflicted effects to the seven races who existed in this world. There was no

transmogrification in the game's setting; however, inside the miasma, one would have received bad statuses such as ability restriction, abnormal states, and so on. Though it depends on the density of the miasma, level and race of the person in question, it was a troublesome hindrance to fight against the enhanced demons.

The miasma appeared in quests against a boss, and it lead to monsters attacking a town; it appeared in various places.

When it comes to a high-ranking demon which had the appearance that was close to human anatomy, high intelligence, high fighting power, and was accompanied by low-ranking demon. It was a monster that always appeared in a difficult dungeon and quest.

Ranks usually depended on strength, and were classified into Grand Duke class, Duke class, Marquis class, Count class, Viscount class, Baron class, and Knight class. By the way, this was the index that existed as a setting in the game; it roughly expressed the fighting power of the demon.

"The enemy is probably a Count class."

"How does Master know?"

Tiera asked Schnee who conjectured the enemy's rank.

Even if Tiera knew the existence of demons as knowledge, she couldn't predict like Schnee did.

“It’s a simple method of elimination. In case of Marquis class and above, it’s plenty enough to destroy the country in a surprise attack, without even the need to transpose the second princess. When it comes to Baron class and below, there is no intelligence to think about that far ahead in time. Its level is high to some extent, but it’s reasonable to think it’s a Count class.”

“I see. By the way, what is the level estimation?”

“Right, I guess it’s about low 300s , to high 400s.”

‘If the Princess dies at the Sacred Place, then it’s beneficial for them. Even if she doesn’t, they achieve their purpose by taking advantage of the confusion.’ Tiera thought, while receiving such an explanation from Schnee.

“The level of that class is somewhere in the middle…I mean, um, Master? I’m still no good to fight against it, even if it’s half of the lowest level.”

Unlike chosen ones with high fighting power, it was impossible for her. Except to get killed by fighting an opponent whose level difference was more than 200. Even if Kagerou was with her, it didn’t mean her fighting power increased.

“No problem, because we’ll only observe this time.”

“Observe…”

‘Should I be pleased that there’s no need to fight? Or should I be amazed with Master who says such a thing?’

‘Something was strange either way’, Tiera thought, as her eyebrows furrowed.

Aloof from Tiera’s worries, Schnee continued walking towards the castle.

Because Tiera heard that the Princess was forced to transpose, she thought that the castle would be in confusion. However, the guards didn’t have the appearance of a panicked state.

“Master, we don’t have permits, will we be all right?”

“No problem, because we won’t use the gate to begin with.”

“Eh?”

A question mark floated from Tiera at Schnee’s words.

Schnee then advanced towards the direction where it was different from the gate.

Though Tiera didn’t understand Schnee’s intention either, she followed her for the time being. Schnee, who walked along the wall for a while, the moment there were no people in the area, she activated a magic skill.

“【Hiding】”

The figures of the two people disappeared with the effect.

Coupled with the bonus effect of Kunoichi, which was Schnee’s main job, they would only be discovered in extreme circumstances.

“My appearance is concealed…Don’t tell me…?”

“You are correct. Hold on a little, because we are going to jump.”

Saying so, Schnee held Tiera in her arms and kicked-off the ground.

“Eek!————”

Without crushing the ground, Schnee and Tiera appeared to fly up gently.

However, Tiera’s scream was forcibly halted from the sudden wind pressure. Though no one would hear it even if she screamed due to the effect of [Hiding], if possible she wanted some time to be prepared.

“One step is not enough after all, huh?”

Besides Tiera who thought about these kind of things, Schnee calmly calculated the distance to the top of the wall.

Because she jumped while holding Tiera, she wouldn’t have arrived at the top if she kept going as is. Since it couldn’t be helped, she put her feet on the wall and kicked with her strength.

Movement system martial arts skill [Wall Run]. With a fixed number of steps, it was a skill that let one run vertically on a wall temporarily when invoked and maintain the foothold.

From that one step, Schnee soundlessly ran up the wall.

“Master, didn’t you make a strange jump just now?”

“It’s a skill that can make foothold on a wall. It’s very convenient.”

“I-I see…”

From Tiera’s point of view, who often had combat training, she wondered ‘will there ever be an opportunity to use a wall as a foothold like that?’ She expected that it was related to a job.

When Tiera asked about Schnee’s job before, she received a single phrase: “It’s a secret.” instead.

“Well then, let’s go down. It’s dangerous if you don’t hang on.”

Regardless of what Tiera thought, Schnee jumped into the air without faltering.

“Ah, ye-AAAAH!”

Tiera screamed from the sudden fall, but Schnee didn’t mind for the time being. Schnee often did this type of fall together with Shin.

Though she jumped off from about the height of an average building, Schnee landed soundlessly, just like when she got on the wall. After she lowered Tiera, Schnee began to walk with silent footsteps right away.

To Tiera who was kneeling on the ground, holding her chest, and was out of breath, the next words that came out from Schnee mercilessly pierced her.

“Now, it’s time to sneak into the castle.”

“Ye-Yes…”

While recalling her past days of Spartan training, Tiera obediently followed after Schnee.

(Even if Shin returned, Master is still Master…)

Schnee was completely ignorant of Tiera who thought about such a thing.

◆◆◆◆

Now, Schnee and Tiera stepped inside the castle. However, their appearances were not to move sneakily like someone suspicious. In fact, they acted in a very bold way.

They entered the castle's front gate after a little walking from the wall, and advanced through the passage where the knights and civil officers were going back and forth. They were moving as if they were in a totally open plain.

"Um, where are we going, Master?"

"To the prison cell. I'm going to remove the abnormal statuses on Cardinal Greyl."

"Well, um, don't we need to defeat the said demon before?"

"No problem. I already caught it."

"Master is too amazing…"

While talking with Schnee who answered indifferently, Tiera thought, 'Demon, it's over for you.'

There were certainly soldiers who were on patrol and on guard duty. However, there was no one powerful enough that could see through Schnee's [Hiding], and Schnee assumed that there was no need to patrol inside a castle in broad daylight.

'It was too easy,' thought Tiera who knew of Schnee's capabilities, but she held back her question about whether if it was all right to have advanced so easily like this.

Even the demon wouldn't expect this kind of development.

And then——.

"We have arrived…"

After a several minutes, they arrived at the front door that lead to the prison cell without any incident.

Guarding the sturdy door were two muscular knights. However, when Schnee approached, they leaned their backs against the wall and sat down, as if they lost their strength.

It was the non-chanting magic skill, Sleep. After taking the key from the guards who have completely fallen asleep, Schnee opened the door that led to the prison cell.

You couldn't say that the prison cell was clean. Even though it was in the royal castle, it had the appearance close to a cave. Each one of the jails were spacious, it was possible to accommodate about ten humans brought together.

Schnee had detected 2 presences within her perceptive range. One of them was the demon and the other belonged to Cardinal Greyl. She headed straight towards the cell because that was where the demon's presence was.

In the prison cell, except Schnee and company, there were only two presences. Even though the room was quite spacious, only the Cardinal was accommodated there.

After leaving Yuzuha to Tiera and put her on standby, Schnee approached the Cardinal and showed herself. Then, a loud voice from Cardinal Greyl asked for her identity.

"Who's there?"

"It's been a long time, Cardinal Greyl."

"!? T-That voice, perhaps you are Raizar-dono? Why are you here?"

Perplexity was mixed in with Cardinal Greyl's voice.

Even the Cardinal heard about the disappearance of Tsuki no Hokora.

"You are affected by Charm and Confusion, aren't you?"

"…You know?"

"I heard you transposed the person who was regarded as an upper class Chosen One and the Second Princess to the Sacred Place."

“As expected from Raizar-dono, you have quick ears. When did it begin? I have little memory of it. I was arrested by Gadras when I recovered my consciousness, and came to be this state. Even if I try to remember it, no matter how many times, only fragmented and vague memories appear.”

Cardinal Greyl frowned in a regretful way; Schnee felt he was a size smaller than the time when he was part of the Armed Struggle Faction. It was likely he felt responsible for the events that occurred.

“That’s the harmful effect when you get two of the mind interference, you know? I came here to remove Charm and Confusion from you completely. Please be at ease. The two people who were transposed are safe.”

The Cardinal suddenly lifted his head.

“What! Is that the truth!?”

“It’s trustworthy information.”

“I thank you for your concern. Having driven people indispensable to the country, the royal family and a Chosen One, to death, you could say I was very worried.”

“It probably won’t take long until they return. Now, since your worries have disappeared, shall I remove the abnormal states?”

“Yes. It’s frightening that I don’t know when I will lose my sanity. Please do so.”

The truth was it's already dispelled, but Schnee told him so to make him feel relieved.

When mind interference group magic skills became a taboo, the knowledge of the recovery method was also lost.

Schnee was going to use an abnormality state recovery magic skill on the weakened Cardinal Greyl.

However, before she could activated the skill, a shadow came flying towards Schnee.

"You finally came out, huh?"

Schnee quickly took out a ninja katana,『Lazuline Flame』, and turned her gaze toward the shadow that flew in.

Before her, there was a monster which had a strange appearance.

The lower half of its body had two different legs: one leg resembled that of a cow and the other was human. An exoskeleton similar to insects covered the being from its chest to its buttocks. The left arm had a pair of crab pincers and a mantis sickle. The right arm on the other hand, had five tentacles, all of which had thorns protruding the tips. Its head was probably an anglerfish. With a fish face that extended horizontally, the demon seemed to had compound eyes.

It was like a chimera created with evil intention. That figure, which could only be called revolting, were characteristic traits of the Count class.

————『Count class Demon　Magunumuku　Level 423』

With Schnee's[Analyze], the enemy's information was disclosed. The rank was what she expected. The only difference was it had "Magunumuku" as an individual name.

"It has a name. I see, so that's why it possesses such intelligence, huh?"

Some demons, apart from the rank, have their own name.

It could be said that there were the demon's version of unique monsters. It was commonly known to be strong, similar to other unique monsters. In an indirect way, its high intelligence seemed to come from it being unique monster.

"Silver *hair*. Blue *eye*s. *Elf*. You are *Schneee*…*Raizaa*…huh?"

Did it have a problem with its vocal chords? It seemed to have a distorted out of pitch voice that echoed in the basement.

"It's been about 500 years since I've met your kind. Though I haven't seen a figure since the natural disaster, it's still a weird appearance as always."

"You all are *annoying*. You *fellows* are always a *nuisance*."

"Naturally, *swish*!!"

The voice of Magunumuku was erased by a *Ting* sound that reverberated underground, and blue sparks lit up the dark prison cell momentarily.

As it weaved through the darkness, the thorn that lengthened from the tip of the tentacles were launched at Schnee, but she

knocked it down in time. The iron bars of the prison cell were already in pieces by Schnee's movement.

Whoosh

Pincers and a sickle attacked Schnee who moved to protect Cardinal Greyl.

Schnee caught the 3 lethal weapons that concentrated an attack on her『Lazuline Flame』. With the katana blade pushed by the Count class, which featured high muscular strength, blue sparks scattered from the『Lazuline Flame』.

Tentacles approached from Schnee's right side, which couldn't move. There were five of them and Schnee's『Lazuline Flame』was suppressed by the pincers and sickle from Magunumuku.

'Caught *you*', Magunumuku thought, but just then a blue trace ran through the base of its tentacles.

Gaaahh!?

The screaming Magunumuku took distance from Schnee.

The compound eyes of Magunumuku caught the dagger,『Scarlet Flame』, in its view in Schnee's left hand, and confirmed that it had stopped the『Lazuline Flame』with its pincers and sickle.

Magunumuku couldn't prevent its tentacles from being freely cut by『Lazuline Flame』, as it was not possible to react to Schnee's simple but quick movements. Even if the tentacles were able to withstand blows from a greatsword, it couldn't endure the blade which carried a mysterious shine.

“G*uu*! Anno*ying*! Why are you *protect*ing a *human*!?”

“He is an innocent person, I cannot let him die with such a false accusation. Besides, I cannot let you guys do whatever you please. To do so would tarnish Tsuki no Hokora’s record.”

“*Tsuki* no Hoko*ra.* The *place* of the H*igh* Hu*man*, huh?”

Mugunumuku, who heard the name Tsuki no Hokora, withdrew back one step and straightened its posture.

Its cut off tentacles regenerated from the part of its base.

“High *Human*, t*hes*e *fell*ows also *kill*ed *many* of my *comrades*. How*ever,* that’s *already over*.”

“Over?”

“T*hey* have a*bando*ned this *world*, and m*an*y of the *warriors* left. H*umans* t*hat rema*ined, *degraded* as t*hey* progressed.”

“Well, I never thought to be told such a story by a demon.”

Though Count class demons were not smart to that extent, when it came to those owning a name, it seemed able to understand the society of the human race.

“H*uma*n *era* is fa*cing* t*he en*d. S*chneee* Raiz*aa*. Be *our comrade*.”

“Is this the lead in to said story? When I think about whatever you said———— It’s impossible.”

Magunumuku’s invitation was declined by Schnee without any hesitation. Such a thing was not worthy to be considered.

Magunumuku, which heard Schnee's answer, bent its without-a-neck-body skillfully, and had a posture that looked puzzled. It appeared to not understand the reason Schnee refused.

"S*chneee* Raiz*aa*. *You* w*er*e l*eft* by *you*r *master*, *why* did you *refuse* us?"

"…Wait."

In the middle of a trifling conversation, Schnee had to estimate the timing of attack, and her pretty eyebrows twitched to the words originating from Magunumuku.

"What did you just say?"

The air had frozen. Everyone in that room felt the illusion that the temperature inside the prison cell fell below freezing.

At this time, only Tiera felt the furs of Yuzuha and Kagerou suddenly bristling up.

"Y*our* m*aster has left* yo*u* be*hin*d. *Th*ese *fellow*s have *gon*e *lon*g ago. *They will* no lo*ng*er *retur*n."

As for Magunumuku, did it not feel the severe cold given off by Schnee? It wouldn't stop talking.

"I*sn*'t it *hateful*? *I* won't *abandon you*. *Isn*'t it *annoying*? Just *rely on tha*t *pow*er."

Magunumuku kept stacking up words in a crooked voice to Schnee, who was silent.

The distorted sound, which was similar to the noise from the abyss, invaded and surged toward Schnee's ears.

That was the skillset of Charm and Confusion that had manipulated Cardinal Greyl. The double mind contamination extended its evil hand towards Schnee.

However——

"Indeed, you all are still not aware of it after all."

Schnee's voice had somewhat a translucent feeling in it, filling the dark wet prison cell and purifying it.

"*Wh*at *a*re y*o*u *talkin*g abo*ut*?"

"If it was the former me, I would surely be angry. I may have relied on feelings and fought."

Schnee's expression changed completely into a calm one from some time ago.

Magunumuku couldn't understand why it didn't feel negative emotions.

"The timing was bad for you."

Schnee, in the next moment after saying so, moved both of her hands that they became blurry, and her weapons『Lazuline Flame』and 『Scarlet Flame』became flashes that penetrated through Magunumuku.

Gaahhh!?

Magunumuku couldn't even react to the overwhelming speed of Schnee.

The blades pierced through the demon's right chest and left side belly; its power and sharpness caused Magunumuku to become sewn on the wall of the prison cell.

There, Schnee approached him in a relaxed manner. Her movement was not in the least fast.

"T*his degree* of——"

Its words didn't continue to the end.

With its view declining diagonally, the figure that projected there, especially the blue shining line, made a strong impression in Magunumuku's mind.

Magunumuku had its head severed. However, it didn't cease breathing immediately because of its tough vitality. Therefore, it was able to recognize the ninja katana that gave off a bizarre air that Schnee held in her hand.

(*Th*at we*apon*, d*o*n’*t tell* me, 『*Blu*e M*oo*n』? *Absurd*, t*hat impos*si…)

Its thought also broke off there.

Magunumuku’s view turned blue for an instant, and this time, it ceased breathing after recognizing the ninja katana.

“If now, I don’t feel like losing to an Element Tail.”

Schnee muttered, while feeling the power flow from 『Blue Moon』.

“Raizar-dono. What in the world was that monster just now…?”

Cardinal Greyl confirmed that the demon had vanished, and turned toward Schnee.

Before his eyes, an expression of astonishment appeared on his face.

“The one I defeated just now was the monster called a demon. The one that was manipulating you. Though you should be able to understand what you saw, there is not much known about it because it was a unique monster.”

“That’s a demon…I have read the Church’s documents. It’s humanity’s enemy and is born from miasma.”

The demon, which hadn’t appeared for a very long time, started making its move.

This, may be an advanced warning that something different from the current would happen.

“The abnormal state that affected you has been dispelled. Because I have to tell the King, let’s go together.”

“Ah, what should I say to express my gratitude? I will repay this kindness by all means.”

“Please, don’t get worked up too much. Now, let’s go.”

Schnee winked at Tiera and the rest who were hiding, and began to walk.

Tiera, who was under a [Hiding] state, was holding Yuzuha, followed the two people. By the way, Kagerou was hidden inside her shadow the whole time.

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Schnee and Cardinal Greyl headed straight to the King’s room. Because Schnee stopped hiding her appearance, people who passed her gave a surprised expression and lowered their heads, which looked impressive to Tiera.

Was the story transmitted to the top brass? A guide came from the King’s bodyguard unit in the midway and led them. It was boisterous inside the castle, probably because the information related to the series of events were not transmitted accurately. As for the guide being dispatched, it was because some of the capable leaders had no choice but to make a move.

“This is the office of the King. Please wait for a little bit.”

Saying so, the guide's soldier knocked on the door, and conveyed Schnee's visit.

Schnee already grasped who was inside the room, and when the door opened, she calmly entered. Cardinal Greyl was urged to go inside, too. Tiera and the rest secretly slipped into the room.

There were three people in the office.

King of the Bayreuth Kingdom, Jeon Courtade Bayreuth.

First princess of Bayreuth Kingdom, Efilia Lou Bayreuth.

Knight's leader of Bayreuth Kingdom, Gadras Jarre.

The color of tension could be perceived on the three people's expression.

"It's been a long time. I need to talk with all of you."

"Ah, Raizar-dono. I'm sorry for meeting you like this. I heard that Tsuki no Hokora had disappeared, and my mind became dismayed, you know?"

"I seemed to have caused you worry. However, Tsuki no Hokora and I are safe. Please rest assured."

Jeon had heard the report of Schnee being alive and well. However, having met her, moreover obtained the information of Tsuki no Hokora was safe from her directly, he felt relieved.

"Raizar-sama. That is Cardinal Greyl, shouldn't he have been put into the prison cell?"

"Yes, I would like to talk regarding that."

To Efilia's question, Schnee explained to them about the existence of demons and how they were behind the scenes of controlling the cardinal.

"Demons…It's written in the history book. The enemy of mankind. For such a thing to make a move…"

"They have mind interference skills, which are considered a taboo. What a troublesome bunch."

Listening to Schnee's story, Jeon and Gadras groaned with a grave expression.

Because they knew Cardinal Greyl was a person who didn't neglect self-training, they seemed to fully realize the nuisances of the mind interference system skills that manipulated him.

Efilia anxiously looked at Schnee.

"With my magic skills, can I oppose them?"

"Even without magic system skills, there are skills that weakens the mind interference. I will hand you the Secret Book, please spread it around as much as possible."

Up until now, such a skill was hardly needed.

However, when the thought of enemies that relied heavily on mind interference skills, like demons, increased, Schnee handed over the『Secret Book』of support system magic skill to Efilia. Though it was a useless item depending on level differences, she thought it was better than doing nothing.

"Also, the two people who were transposed are also safe."

“Oh, is that the truth?!”

“What a relief…”

“Though princess and Shin-dono are said to be upper class Chosen Ones, I thought they wouldn’t die easily, no, I’m glad, very glad.”

Jeon, Efilia and Gadras looked like they were relieved to hear the safety of Rionne and Shin.

“As for Cardinal Greyl, he has not been affected by mind interference either. Therefore, I came with him to go here.”

“This time I have troubled you all.”

“No, as Raizar-dono said, it was because you received mind interference; it would be the same if it was us. I would like Cardinal Greyl to serve as a mediator with the church as always.”

“Yes sir, I promise to give more effort.”

The cardinal bowed his head to the King.

Because he was not the cause of the event, there was no significant punishment.

“First of all, we need to manage the information. When people of the castle are confused, they become uneasy.”

“Understood. Raizar-dono, what will you do after this?”

“There is a place I must go. Excuse me.”

Schnee bowed and turned back.

Though it was extremely rude toward a King, no one said anything because it was Schnee.

Jeon, as usual, already turned his head and gave instructions to Gadras.

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“What will we do from now on, Master?”

“We are heading toward the fort city Balmel. Because when Shin and Rionne escape from the Sacred Place, they will be going there.”

After buying food in town, Schnee and Tiera appeared outside the ramparts.

Since Shin had the wagon, they were going to head on foot from here. Schnee and Yuzuha moved by themselves, but Tiera rode on Kagerou’s back, which transformed to just the right size.

Like the blowing winds, Schnee and the rest ran through the road.

With[Hiding]still in effect, and due to the running speed that was incomparable with horses, the merchants and adventurers passing by were plagued with the sudden gust———.

“Master~! It’s fast! Too fast!”

“G-Gruu…”

Occasionally, they heard such voices too.

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Part 2.

Going back in time, immediately after Shin and Rionne were transferred to Sacred Place Kalkia.

“How was it?”

“I was able to contact and convey the message to my companions. They will meet us at Balmel and will contact me if something comes up. I asked them to inform the king that the princess is safe for now, but please don’t expect too much.”

Shin thought about what to do next, while telling Rionne; although it was quite different from his actual conversation with Schnee.

Though he wanted to explore the Sacred Place, it would certainly be bad if he took Rionne with him, so he decided to make escaping a top priority and exploration as a bonus.

Even though Rionne was said to be an upper class Chosen One, if the rumored monsters’ information were correct, she would be in danger if Shin didn’t guard her.

“Rionne-sama, do you know anything about the Sacred Place?”

“No, this is also my first time inside, but I have heard stories about the monsters that would come out, and that it would take several upper class Chosen Ones’ everything to deal with them.”

“That’s similar to the information I know. In any case, I will need a weapon, right?”

“Indeed, it’s impossible without a weapon. Is it a blessing in disguise that I have this?”

Rionne said and took out『Muspelm』from the case she held in hand.

Was this because Rionne had a weapon that could bear all of her energy? Though she was transposed to the danger zone, there was no grim facial expression from her.

Since the case became useless baggage under the current situation, she decided to leave it behind. Because『Muspelm』was currently sheathed in what was thought to be a custom-designed scabbard, she didn’t need to carry it exposed.

“I am good, but what about you, Shin? There may be no handy weapons lying around…”

Rionne, who was equipped with『Muspelm』, muttered as she looked at Shin.

However, Shin didn’t panic. If what he needed was a weapon, he had more than he could possibly use and had explanations for having them prepared.

“It’s okay, because I have this.”

Shin said and took out a piece of a card from his chest pocket and materialized it.

“That’s…?!”

“Haven’t I said it before? I have one or two trumps card concealed.”

Shin laughed a bit proudly towards the surprised Rionne.

What Shin was holding was something that could be misinterpreted as a weak, elliptic-shaped, flattened bar. The katana without-brim had a thickened portion part of the blade, which also best describes its shape.

Its length was about one and a half mel and was fully black in color. Designs like Sanskrit characters were drawn in red on its flat part. Though it had the appearance of a sword, because the weapon was of the heavyweight class like a mace or a long staff, it was mainly for smashing, not cutting, during combat.

This weapon, which seemed to have completely opposite attributes compared to『Muspelm』, was an average《Mythology》grade, named『Kakura』. The reason why it had a black appearance was because most of it was made of adamantine. There was a little amount of orichalcum in its core, and mithril was used for the Sanskrit characters; as a result, it could deal with the opponent’s magical and physical attacks.

“Even though I thought that you were no ordinary person, when you concealed such a thing…”

“I went through many hardships to obtain it, so please keep it a secret if possible.”

Shin confirmed his senses by taking a swing of『Kakura』, which was enveloped by a red aura.

By contrast with its thin appearance, because the material was adamantine, its weight was as heavy as Rionne’s『Muspelm』. The gust of wind conveyed the weight of a single swing.

“I just wanted to ask one thing, where do the Sacred Place investigation teams enter? I have a feeling that they exit over there.”

“Among the gates are four cardinal directions, they enter through the southern gate; of course, it won’t be so easy to pass by.”

“Is it difficult to climb the surrounding walls?”

“Ah, there was one person who tried it once. It’s fine to do it from the outside, but when you try from the inside, monsters seem to only target you. Evasion is also difficult once noticed.”

From the place where Shin and Rionne were, walls that surrounded Kalkia were seen.

Even if one climbed the wall which, by the way, was higher than Bayreuth’s, and did so without any hindrances, it would probably still take a considerable amount of time.

It would take even more time while on the lookout for monsters.

(But if I get serious, it’s possible to do it…)

Though Shin could do it, his ability may be known to Rionne, and it was a simple matter to escape for the two people.

The technique of combining martial arts and magic skills to run up the wall quickly was a relatively popular technique in a battle between players. If he forcibly used the technique little by little, he may be able to do it with just either one of the skills alone. However, according to what he heard from Rionne's story, that technique must have been lost too.

"Well then, Shin, let's advance cautiously."

"Yes."

The two people moved toward the south gate while observing their surroundings for presences.

Because Kalkia was a city from the game era, Shin thought he could restore the map; however, against his expectations, when he tried there were no significant changes. Still, the map seemed to have been drawn from scratch again.

While watching the presences of monsters, they moved along and jumped onto a roof, and Shin felt his view was distorted.

"What?"

Shin found himself standing on the ground before he knew it.

He intended to jump onto the roof above, but the sensation that transmitted to his feet certainly came through the ground.

"Shin, you felt the same thing too?"

When Shin turned around, Rionne stood there with a similar perplexed expression.

“Wait a minute. Let me try it again just to make sure.”

Saying so, Shin kicked-off the ground a little stronger.

As usual, he only put enough strength so that he could just jump over the roof of the building. However, nothing happened.

“Is this a transition point?”

It was possible to jump to a certain extent. However, when one reached above the height of a certain level, the body that should be jumping up landed on the ground.

“Rionne-sama, how did I look to you?”

For confirmation, Shin asked Rionne.

“You certainly jumped, there’s no doubt about it. However, there, when you reached the height just above the roof of the 1st floor, your figure, which should have been heading up, disappeared, and you appeared on the ground in the next moment.”

While Rionne pointed at the roof of a certain building in front of Shin, she explained how she saw him.

“I see…If we assume that that will happen every time we try to ascend above a certain height, it means that it is blocked.”

Shin concluded.

“This is the first time I’ve seen such a phenomenon. Shin, do you know anything?”

“I think that I have some idea of what’s going on. Can we move continue along the road as is to confirm my hypothesis?”

“I don’t mind, so I’ll leave it to you.”

Shin moved through the readjusted boundary of the main street.

In the middle of the street, they finally stopped in front of a narrow alley that could barely fit two people.

“Rionne-sama, I will enter the alleyway now, please wait here.”

“Okay.”

After saying a few words to Rionne, Shin walked into the alley.

In the following moment, when Shin’s whole body entered the passage, his vision became distorted, and a different scene of the alley came into view.

In Rionne’s eyes, just like what happened to Shin a while ago, Shin seemed to return from the alley unnaturally.

“What on earth is this…?”

Rionne looked at Shin with a puzzled expression.

Although it happened in front of her eyes, she seemingly couldn’t make any sense of it.

“This one too, huh?”

“Shin, can you please explain what is going on? Something is strange with today’s events.”

Rionne asked Shin, who looked like he understood what was going on.

“Sorry, I just want to confirm one last time, because I think I can be sure after this one, could you please wait a little?”

“Muu! If you have to, then it can’t be helped. Also, what is it that you want to confirm?”

Rionne asked as she pressed Shin ahead.

“When we get on this road, there should be a glowing sphere floating. Because you can’t move forward if you go off the road, please take note of it.”

Shin told Rionne the details and began to walk.

Rionne too followed him, while looking closely at her surroundings.

“Rionne-sama, I saw it. It’s there.”

“…Indeed, it’s as you say, a sphere of light.”

The way ahead, also in the center of the road, was a floating sphere with a diameter of about 30 cemels, which emitted a white light.

The brightness was not very strong; one would not be blinded even if they looked straight at it.

“I guess there’s no mistake about it. Somehow this whole city seems to have become a dungeon.”

“WAIT, WHAT?!”

Rionne heard Shin’s explanation, but raised her voice in surprise.

Though the features for the city were lost because of the roaming monsters, it was once a place known to be full of prosperity. When she heard that it become a dungeon, it couldn’t be helped that she was surprised.

“But, what should we do now? I’ve never heard of a town becoming a dungeon before.”

“Even though I say ‘dungeon’, please don’t worry, because it’s different from a general one.”

Shin talked calmly to Rionne who frowned and pondered.

Shin actually knew this whole dungeon-making thing well.

“Please explain it to me, Shin.”

“Sure. What I’m saying is, In the current situation, we can only reach the exit if we go along a specific route.”

“Specific route? Then, the reason for us not being able to move above the roof and the alley…”

“Yes, it’s because it deviates from the specific route. If you try taking shortcuts that greatly deviate from the route, you return to your original location. In order to escape, we must advance following this shining sphere as a marker.”

Shin had remembered that immediately after a massive update, a time-attack race was held using the entire city.

In the city that newly appeared in the update, there were no players' shops, guild bases and so on. So, in the case of an event using a whole city which was thought to be impossible, was implemented at this opportunity; a time-attack race.

With the center of the city as the entrance, players competed in a time trial to escape from there. The players and parties with the shortest time got a limited edition rare item distributed from the event; therefore, Shin had seen this sphere before.

"I don't remember registering in this race though."

Shin continued talking in a small mutter that was not audible to Rionne.

"Because there are no traps installed on the route, if we find the sphere while killing monsters, we should be able to escape without any trouble."

Monsters would emerge and would match the stats of the players.

[Limit] couldn't be released during an event, and decreased stats were applied. In addition, the course became longer if the stats were high; it was the overview of the time-attack race that Shin knew.

Instead of the race deciding on stats or learned techniques, the race was decided upon the escape routes that were randomly generated and differed in length.

(It's possible to release [Limit] now, but will it be different from the event in the game? No…, to begin with, there is a possibility I cannot interfere with the stats because the game became a reality, right?)

Because this world itself was mysterious, Shin couldn't be certain, but then, not everything should act according to the game scenarios.

"I see, is there a time limit? When exploring the ancient ruins and the dungeon, I heard that there were such things."

"No, there should not be."

It was an event which one could clear even if one took their time.

The goal was to compete for the quickest time to escape. According to Shin's knowledge, there was no particular penalty in the case of being slow.

"Shin, though it may seem bad when I say it this way, I feel lucky to be teleported with you. Thanks to you, I did not have to make any effort in trying to solve this riddle."

Rionne said while smiling wryly.

If Rionne was actually alone, it was certain that she would waste time before she understood the situation.

"Then, Shin, let's go look for the lightsphere. Tell me if there's a place that differs from your knowledge. This is a Sacred Place, I don't know what can happen."

“Understood. As for this sphere, it becomes the transition point to the next route. First, I will be transposed ahead. I will return immediately if there is nothing, so please standby.”

“Okay.”

Hearing Rionne’s answer, Shin touched the sphere.

His surrounding scenery suddenly changed in an instant, and Shin was in a different place than a moment ago. When he checked the map, the distance between him and Rionne was not that far. It was the distance of less than five minutes if walking normally.

“This is the part of the race where it gets unpleasant.”

Shin sighed, as he recalled the race that he had experienced before. He returned to Rionne right away.

“It’s safe for transposing. Now then, let’s go.”

“I’m sorry to leave you in a dangerous position.”

“I cannot afford to let you, the princess, to be in my position. Besides, there are groups of monsters ahead at the transposing point. If it were just me, I could only run away.”

Shin, on the contrary, could easily crush the enemies ahead.

If he was in a place where he wouldn’t be seen, Shin would instantly kill any monster that was there without hesitating.

“There’s no need for etiquette here. Let’s both survive and leave together.”

“Of course.”

In response to Rionne’s words, which were full of determination, Shin returned a big nod.

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With Shin as the lead, the two people walked down the street.

During the time-attack race, it was basically impossible to move forward except through the main street. There were exceptions, such as hidden passage-like alleys and shortcuts, but it depended completely on luck whether or not they were found.

Unless they were in a very desperate situation and aimed for reversal, it only cost time to look for such a thing. Rionne was also looking for such alleys at first, but with Shin’s advice, she went ahead through the main street obediently.

In a place where they approached a crossroad, Shin looked back at Rionne.

“Rionne-sama, let’s go straight from here.”

“Did you find something?”

“There are three monsters on the left, one on the right. Because there is nothing up front, we should go there first. If it’s no good, we go to the right. Even if the left is the correct path, there will be

a series of battles. I think we should avoid battle as much as possible."

In Shin's perception range, there were already several presences of monsters.

Because he could narrow down the range to value accuracy, he was able to see their names and levels.

On the left side, there was a level 602 wolf type monster "Blue-Mist Hound", a scorpion type monster level 544, "Spoerk", and three level 588 slime type monsters, "Gilslay".

He could see that it was a three-way battle from the movement of the markers. It would probably be hard for Rionne to jump in there.

In the opposite direction, there was a ghost type monster level 531, Ghillie Wize.

It was a troublesome monster that uses some advanced level magic skills, but with Shin's『Kakura』and Rionne's『Muspelm』, they had more than enough to deal effective damage to it. Even with Rionne's fighting ability alone, going right was the easiest fight. There was no problem even if she were to be directly hit by magic skills if Shin became her shield.

"That's right, there are only two of us. We should avoid the fights that are likely to be disadvantageous."

Rionne seemed to believe Shin's story, and stepped straight forward.

However, the view for the two people became distorted after they walked for about five minutes. It was incomprehensible because it was in the middle of the main street, and the left and right shops changed similarly to a moment ago.

“It seems to be no good here.”

“It looks like it. No choice but to return.”

Since they could not proceed forward, as they agreed beforehand, they returned and instead turned left.

Shin caught the monster’s appearance in his view after moving for a while.

“It’s here. It’s still the only monster, and there’s no other presences of monsters nearby.”

Before the two people was a figure of a mummy, which wore a mist-like black robe and had a twisted, warped-shaped staff.

Only the head and arms resembled the figure of a mummy, neither the legs nor upper body were there. It was a monster that fell into heresy; its own body had turned into mist. Its name was Ghillie Wize.

In fact, by looking at it alone, the mummy that appeared had no physical substances for its head and arms either. It could be said that normal weapons couldn’t deal proper damage; it was a mage type monster which could resist physical attacks.

“What… is that?!”

“A ghost type monster, Ghillie Wize. It can use earth and wind magic. Though it seems to hold a staff, because the staff is floating, it’s movements are irregular. Please be careful.”

“Thanks for the advice!”

Shin gave important info to Rionne while running.

If a person saw this creature for the first time, they may have thought that it was holding a staff, and they would have received severe damage from the flying stick, as they would not be able to perceive any movement from the monster.

“Suuuooooooooooooonyyyyyyyyyyyyyy!!!”

Its voice reverberated, not knowing where it came from.

It was the magic chants of Ghillie Wize.

“It’s coming!”

Almost at the same time as the Ghillie Wize finished chanting, Shin shouted.

What it released was a wind system magic skill, [Air Barret] and [Air Cutter]. Bullets of compressed wind and blades of sharp wind swooped down on Rionne and Shin. Though both magics were elementary level, the number of attacks were no match for an ordinary mage.

“This degree!!!”

Rionne closed the distance while lightly evading the barrage of winds from Ghillie Wize.

Sparing no effort to display her strengthened physical ability by the support system martial arts skill [Spirit Manipulation • Katsusen], she continued dodging the wind magic which should be difficult to see.

Shin too, closed the gap in the same manner as Rionne, approaching the Ghillie Wize. However, if one looked closely, the magic shots actually vanished when they neared Shin. With the magic resistance from the said High Human's abnormality, the magic couldn't maintain its form. Judging from mage types such as Ghillie Wize, the existence of Shin had a thoroughly bad compatibility.

"Ziiii!!?"

That surprised voice originated from the Ghillie Wize.

Apparently it had noticed that the magic around Shin had disappeared.

While moving with a speed matching Rionne's, Shin had a grin and laugh that could only be seen by the Ghillie Wize.

"Uhh!!?"

The word that came out, did it mean, "Crap!!?" if it was said by a human?

It may have realized that its magic didn't work. The mummy's face, which should have had no expression, appeared to twitch.

The approaching figure of Shin, who was a little behind than Rionne, must have appeared as the devil in the Ghillie Wize's

eyes. It's being more cautious toward Shin rather than Rionne who was holding a holy sword that should be its weakness, was the best evidence of it.

"BeeeeJaaaaaaaaaa!!"

With a cry, a large mass of magic power developed around the Ghillie Wize.

It was charging the wind system magic skill 「Storm Blast」 and earth system magic skill「Dragoon Bite」. With a tornado that exceeded the height of the Ghillie Wize, and a huge clay jaw modeled from a dragon, the skill 「Air Barret」 flew wildly, pushing the two attackers.

"Damn it! Is this the power of a monster in the Sacred Place?"

Even Rionne seemed to be alarmed by this.

Putting strength into the hand holding『Muspelm』, she was going to activate some kind of skill. However, Shin interrupted there.

"Leave it to me here! Rionne-sama, you deal blows on that fellow!"

"Okay, you can count on me!"

Rionne canceled the skill she was going to invoke, and accumulated more power into her arm.

Though it was quite dangerous if Shin failed, Rionne didn't think that Shin would make a mistake. Even if she only knew a little about his ability, she didn't doubt Shin's so called trump card, 『Kakura』.

Shin stepped forth strongly by one step while a pair of advanced level magics drew nearer. These magic skills were unleashed with the Ghillie Wize's whole power. However, the magic already lost its power due to Shin's magic resistance; in fact, the magic was on the verge of dispersing.

"Here I go~!!"

Shin used a side sweep towards the magic, which would disappear if blown apart.

Contradictory with its appearance, in front of『Kakura』's brandish, which carried a considerable amount of mass, was able to erase the magic that approached the two people so easily that it was basically disappointing. The Ghillie Wize too, never thought that it would be easily broken there.

Seeing Shin and Rionne charging through unscathed, the Ghillie Wize's movement already stopped completely. Rionne, who never overlooked such opportunities quickly took advantage.

"Got you!!"

Rionne mightily jumped up from behind Shin and rotated once in the air.

Releasing the accumulated power, she invoked the fencing technique system martial arts〔Full Moon Edge〕. With centrifugal force added to the mass of『Muspelm』, she struck the increasingly white radiant blade against the Ghillie Wize.

"Dyyyyyyyyyyyyy――!!"

The slashing attack pierced the robe diagonally and blew off one-third of what the Ghillie Wize was composed of, and cut off the arm that held the staff.

The cut off arm then vanished into thin air. Even though it was said to be disembodied, it couldn't avoid damage if so much of its body got blown off. All the more was true since the attack had a light attribute to it, which was its weak point.

The staff that should have been floating around was also lying on the ground now. The Ghillie Wize screamed at the substantial damage it received, but its suffering hadn't ended yet. This is because, charging towards the Ghillie Wize that had received so much damage and had started to retreat; was Shin.

Shin was grinning and laughing again.

It's needless to say that the Ghillie Wize saw Shin, who had a brutal smile, as the devil.

"Hiiiii!?"

Did it have intelligence? The Ghillie Wize started to desperately take distance, as it no longer raised the "Hiiii!?" voice.

However, it was not possible to escape from Shin's pursuit.

"Time to put an end to this fellow!!"

Shin jumped and swung downwards, on the Ghillie Wize which fell due to damage.

It was the mallet technique system martial arts skill 【Fission】 that enveloped 『Kakura』. Because of the very few martial arts

skills that could cause damage to disembodied monsters, the already strong『Kakura』was powered up even more.

“orz…”

Ghillie Wize uttered at its final moment as a single blow came from sky; although, what it muttered was a meaning even itself didn’t understand.

“It’s unexpectedly an easy win.”

Rionne seemed to feel satisfied, for the battle that ended after only a few minutes.

“It may be because its weak point is the light attribute bestowed on『Muspelm』. Added with its high quality, somehow even with only us, two upper class Chosen Ones, we were able to defeat it. It’s usually not so easy.”

Because Shin was troubled that it was strange to be thinking optimistically, he gave a firm reminder.

Perhaps, if his weapon was an iron bar or sword borrowed from the ruins, it hardly would have gone in this direction. Though Ghillie Wize was brought down very easily, if its opponents were ordinary soldiers, it had the ability to destroy approximately a small country on its own. It just had a bad matchup this time.

“I get it. Anyway, my level didn’t go up even when I defeated a unique Skull Face, but this time it did. While it may be true that the battle was easy, I never thought it was weak.”

Apparently, Rionne's level had gone up.

The opponent was close to her rank in this case. For such, she earned enough experience points to level up.

"Moreover, I also acquired some kind of title."

"Title?"

'Titles are obtained through battles and leveling up', Shin thought as he recalled the things that corresponded to the current battle.

"Yes, it's displayed as 'Natural Enemy of Magic Users'."

'Natural Enemy of Magic Users' was a title that was obtained by defeating a monster without using magic, and without receiving any magic damage when fighting against an opponent who uses advanced level magic skills. There was an effect of decreasing the damage of magic skills by 2 percent.

"Oh, I see…but is it okay to tell me that? This kind of thing should be kept a secret, right?"

"It's thanks to you that I obtained this, Shin. Besides, you will not spread such a thing around, will you?"

"That's true, but…"

Before he knew it, Rionne's reliability on Shin seemed to have risen.

Was it because they both fought together?

“Still, from your appearance, you seem to know the effect of the title, Shin.”

“Well, what are you talking about?”

“A while ago, you said “I see”, didn’t you?’

He seemed to have been exposed from his answer.

Because he had a hunch that it would be bad if he knew in detail, he didn’t answer affirmatively. On that subject, Shin recalled that ‘titles are rarer than skills’.

“…I don’t remember it.”

“Are you a noble?…”

Rionne gave out a little disgusted feeling; the nobles in this world seemed to have said similar things, too.

When related to politics, these types of lines seemed to be common anywhere.

“Fufu, but I’m more interested in you suddenly. However, it’s an emergency now. I will question you later on. Then, I will go ahead.”

Did something tug on Rionne’s heartstrings? She began to run away with a small laugh.

Her eyes felt like a hunter who found their prey.

“…Roger that.”

‘I would be rather thankful if you forgot that,’ Shin thought while following Rionne.

When he escaped from the Sacred Place, Shin had a premonition that a troublesome thing like this would come back when he returned.

◆◆◆◆

Part 3.

"Shin, how many monsters are within your perception range?"

"Besides the other three that I mentioned earlier, there are more than 20 in total. From what I know, most of them supposedly don't make big movements, but we can't be careless because some of them tend to disregard this trend too."

Shin answered to Rionne, while searching for the white sphere to make sure that this was the correct route.

"It would be nice if the rest of the way goes as smoothly as it has been so far."

"That, I agree with you."

It was his honest, true feeling.

"Hmm?"

While repeatedly being transposed for several times, Shin noticed something.

After the battle against Ghillie Wize, the route was gradually approaching the center of Kalkia.

"What's wrong? Is something funny?"

“No, it’s just that I think we are moving away from the gate.”

The route was completely random. There was a behavioral pattern in which a person could transition near the gate in one go.

Were there any requirements that had to be fulfilled during the race to reach the gate? Or was it that the race’s goal was to reach the center? Shin didn’t know, but since it was a one-way route, they would eventually return to the gate even if they came close to the center.

“Indeed. Well, this area in the Sacred Place is uncharted territory, so it’s a good chance to unravel such a place…”

“Although life is more important than information,” Rionne continued and as she followed behind Shin.

When they passed through the street after being transposed some time ago, they used the shade of a wall and the tree that grew in the garden of a residential building to conceal themselves from the wandering monsters.

Such a small technique was possible; although the alleyway couldn’t be used.

Fortunately, they were not lacking hiding places thanks to a house that hadn’t yet collapsed.

The monsters’ blind spots were exploited, as they went behind buildings, garden fences, and occasionally went against the direction of the route.

However, there were some monsters that noticed them because some of the monsters had a perception ability that didn't rely on sight, but instead sound or heat.

(It's hard not being able to use skills thoughtlessly…Hiding!)

Shin activated the skill, without Rionne noticing. It was a non-system skill which fell under magic skills, 「Hiding」.

Though its effect was lower than the 「Hiding」 of support system martial arts skills, it could conceal presences, sound, etc. to a number of people like a party within a fixed range. It was useful using this skill too, as they wouldn't be discovered by snake or bat type monsters.

'However, it is difficult as I can't use the skill with all of my strength,' Shin thought once again.

Even for an upper class Chosen One, dozens of them didn't have the skill either when he asked Schnee about it.

He didn't worry about it at that time, but when being with a person like Rionne, it was not done easily.

Even under normal circumstances, she was interested in him because he was knowledgeable in weapons and titles. If various skills of martial arts or magic that he was able to use were discovered, what kind of questioning would await?

(Why is it when coming to a different world, I have limited play?)

‘If the members Schnee, Tiera, and Wilhelm were here, it wouldn’t be a pain in the ass like this,’ Shin thought while running.

It was a considerably high pace, but as expected from a Chosen One, Rionne didn’t have a shortness of breath and so on. Then, after transposing repeatedly several times; just when Shin thought, ‘can we reach the gate without any troubles?’ a formidable enemy appeared.

“…Is that Gilslay?”

It was a different individual that composed 3-way battles some time ago.

With a level of 684, that Gilslay was the highest level among what he saw in Kalkia. It was not a good opponent to be in conflict with as it had random movement and had no regularity.

Weren’t the small-fry enemies that came out in the beginning of the game slimes? This was a monster that could be classified as a formidable boss character.

The most troublesome thing about this Gilslay was that the monster had exceptionally high fighting power for a slime.

Was it because its gel-like shape was irregular? Almost all physical attacks were ineffective. Furthermore, its body stretched out like a tentacle and struck in the same way as a whip. It thrust like a spear, wrapping around to capture its target, and did so until the attacks broke the opponent’s battle formation.

In addition to the body fluids that secreted from Gilslay's body, it also had an effect of reducing the durability of weapons and armor. It was known to be a typical time-consuming monster, so the battle was prolonged even longer.

Even if its appearance was about 4 mels of semi-transparent water and steamed bun-like, one should never be careless.

"Slime, huh? But if it's only huge then there's no problem. Let's not stand still, but breakthrough in one go."

"Ahh!? Hey hey, Rionne, don't go there!!?"

However, apparently Rionne recognized that the said slime was a small-fry and didn't stay still.

Did she not hear Shin's panicky voice that said to restrain herself? She went for the endgame as she closed the distance in one breath by using her strength as an upper class Chosen One.

"*Hmph*!! ——Guah!? What on earth is this?!"

Rionne, who swung down 『Muspelm』 at Gilslay, stopped moving when the bizarre reaction occurred.

If Gilslay was similar to any ordinary slime, it definitely would be defeated if she could destroy its core. However, it couldn't be easily done as Shin examined the situation. The opponent was a monster whose level exceeded 600. It was not so naive as to overlook the chance of Rionne stopping.

Gilslay immediately moved to counterattack. Did it think that she was not a strong opponent? Rionne's limbs were restrained by the body that stretched out like tentacles.

Moreover, Rionne was not able to react to the unexpected speed.

"Good grief, I told you so!"

The sounds of Rionne's protective gears dissolving by the Gilslay's body fluid was heard.

Since he couldn't just leave her as she was now, Shin approached the slime brandishing his『Kakura』.

『Kakura』had a clad in mallet technique system martial arts skill【Sandstorm Burst】—A single blow of『Kakura』was dyed in a brown aura, and blew away the tentacles that had caught Rionne.

Shin's current stats were quite restricted, but he somehow managed to deal damage to Gilslay.

Nevertheless, Gilslay didn't appear to have the physical resistance of its main body as the tentacles became thinner. 【Sandstorm Burst】was effective against opponents who had high physical defense, so it may have been a good idea to use it.

"We will fall back so don't move for a moment!"

The liberated Rionne was held with one hand by Shin, who jumped back.

With Shin's leg power, they were able to escape from Gilslay's attack range in one jump. Tentacles of Gilslay pierced the place where Shin was before just one breath later.

The road they were on used a orichalchum mixture for the pavement. Only the strength of a rampaging middle class Dragon could crack it.

Even so, the tentacles of Gilslay had easily pierced the pavement.

"It penetrated through the orichalcum pavement…"

If it's Shin's armor strength, there was no problem receiving any number of attacks, even on his own body. However, knowing the hardness of the pavement, his face was stiff instinctively.

Even though there was no damage, Shin unleashed a single blow and blew out the tentacles. Did the Gislay judge him as a threat? Unlike when it was against Rionne, the Gilslay didn't go easy.

"Shin, what is that? Is it really a slime?!"

"Calm down first, I'll explain it to you. That is Gilslay, a monster that is strong at resisting physical attacks. Never confuse that with small-fry slimes from the grassy plains."

Because it would be a problem if Gilslay charged again, Shin explained briefly what kind of opponent it was to Rionne.

It was indeed troublesome if he plunged into the enemy who didn't match his power.

“…Sorry, it was careless of me. Even though we are in the Sacred Place.”

“Well, it’s inevitable if you only know about ordinary slimes. Gilslay has a gentle-looking appearance; however, be it slashing or striking, it’s a troublesome opponent since half-hearted attacks are reduced to nothing and have no effect.”

“Ah, it pierced through its body. For my weapon to really be repelled.”

Even though it was a slash without any skill, the attack of『Muspelm』was repelled.

Looking at Rionne, who nodded seriously, Shin, who for now felt relieved, thought ‘Is this alright?’.

While Rionne was glaring at Gilslay and preparing『Muspelm』, Shin thought about the plan. It wouldn’t be difficult to separate from Gilslay, as it was a high defense but low agility opponent.

If there was a problem, it lied in its tracking ability.

The monsters who didn’t rely on their five senses could perceive many things such as the opponent’s magic or presence and could pursue them.

Among them, slimes were especially good with this ability. Even if they thought they succeeded in escaping, there were many cases where it actually followed them.

In many places, leaving it alone would lead to more danger. It seemed better to defeat it, Shin concluded.

“This fellow has a considerably high sensing ability. Because we’ve already been targeted, it will chase us for a long time even if we escape. I think I’ll defeat it here, how’s that?”

“I won’t object for my future’s sake, but can you break through that defense, Shin?”

Rionne, who had experienced the firmness of the slime firsthand, had her eyes seem doubtful toward Shin.

The story would have been different if the attribute bestowed upon『Muspelm』was flame or thunder, but it couldn’t be helped that she said that. Light attributes tended to be very effective against monsters such as undead and ghosts, but it were not very effective towards other monsters.

In other words, since Rionne’s attack was only a physical attack with light attribute, it was ineffective towards Gilslay.

“I’ve got few tricks up my sleeve. I can clear the way to the core, so please destroy the core with your strongest skill. Since the core itself is quite fragile, it should be good to go.”

Generally, monsters with cores were vulnerable to direct attacks on it. It was especially noticeable on the slime group.

It was said that it was the result of balance adjustments for having high defensive power except for the core. So, if given the chance, Shin judged that there would be no problem if it was Rionne’s skill and her weapon’s ability to break the core.

“Shin’s trump card huh? All right then. I’ll leave it to you.”

As if there was no uneasiness, Rionne faced towards the Gilslay.

『Muspelm』was carried on her shoulder and was ready to step up at any time. Rionne would've been knocked down by Gilslay if Shin wasn't there——No, she would have been devoured. The binding force of the tentacles seemed to laugh at Rionne, who resisted desperately. It was frightening just remembering it.

However, with such a strong binding, Shin blew it away with only a single blow, which was why she said she would leave it to Shin.

'It would be a disgrace as a woman if I didn't go,' Rionne thought and let her entire body be filled with power; at the same time, she got rid of idle thoughts from her consciousness.

This world's mental improvement enhances precision and the power of skills. The original power increased a little, regardless of skills and arts.

Rionne, while waiting for Shin's signal, prepared the skill that she would unleash.

"I have to meet his expectations."

Shin took out a card. A blue flame-like pattern was drawn on the surface.

"【Flare Burst】release!"

Simultaneously with the shout, Shin pointed the card toward Gilslay.

Then as the card tore itself apart, a sphere with a diameter of about 30 cemels appeared.

In the following moment, a heat ray around 1 mel was discharged from the sphere.

The sphere was blue on the outside and white in the center, and charged through the air aiming at Gilslay's core.

Did it determine that it couldn't dodge the attack? The Gilslay expand its volume size as the [Flare Burst] hit it directly.

There, the heat ray pierced through while scorching the air.

"——!!? ——!!!"

Though the Gilslay desperately withstood it, its body had low resistance to magic by nature from the start. Even if the strengthening by level was taken into account, it wasn't able to endure the [Flare Burst].

When the bluish-white heat ray went off, the figure of Gilslay could be seen with a portion of its body vaporized in the line of fire.

The heat ray didn't destroy the core, but it was left half exposed.

It may be because a quarter or more of its original volume vanished at once, and the Gilslay didn't move immediately after receiving the heat ray.

"Now!"

"Leave it to me!!"

Without missing the opportunity, Rionne, who reacted to Shin's voice, prepared to use『Muspelm』and dashed toward Gilslay right away.

Rionne was surprised of the【Flare Burst】's power, but since she had to focus on defeating the enemy, she left that thought in the corner of her mind.

With the increased concentration, Rionne's ability was perfectly demonstrated.

As of now, she arrived at the front of Gilslay quickly, leaving her afterimage as she swung down the『Muspelm』, and the core was cut in two with little resistance.

"!!?"

Once the weak point of Gilslay was cut right in half, its gel body shook, and its life was ended.

Afterwards, the jewels broke into two and dropped on the ground along with a gel substance.

"Let's collect the jewels and leave quickly. Other monsters are approaching as they noticed the battle noises."

"Understood. Please lead the way."

The jewels, which rolled over the ground, were picked up while running. The two people ran at full speed on the supposed correct route.

“By the way Shin, your language has seemed quite friendly since a while ago.”

“Ah…”

Rionne pointed out as if she just remembered and Shin looked at her with a distorted expression.

His face had “Oops!” clearly written there. Ever since he warned Rionne, who had jumped out recklessly in the spur of the moment towards Gilslay, he had been talking like that without change.

“I wonder if the wall between us disappeared a little, Shin?”

“Ah no, I’m sorry. It’s just, when in battle, my wording becomes rough.”

“Mu! I don’t mind it as is. This is a situation where we must entrust each other’s lives. It’s difficult to cooperate if you’re strangely humbled.”

“Even if you say so, I can’t just talk like this after all…”

In Shin’s mind, in a society where a privileged class such as the royal family and nobles exist, a commoner and the like shouldn’t be talking to them over-familiarly.

“That won’t do. This is the Sacred Place, you know? Anything trivial can cause death. From being modest some time ago, the consequences of it may delay me a bit. If I am killed by my own mistake, then that’s what I deserve. However, if you are put in danger because of my mistake, I’ll not be able to live with it, so

dying is not an option. At this time, let's leave out the strange modesty from each other. You can drop the formalities and just call me Rionne."

"Well, um…"

Though it was about the problem of wording, before he knew it, it became a serious matter between life or death.

As for the matter of Gilslay, Shin didn't mean to be especially reserved toward Rionne, but she seemed to interpret so. Still, when it comes to the matter of life or death, he couldn't decline it without special reason. Before he was aware, it was difficult to continue keeping a distance in that type of atmosphere.

"…Got it. However, I think we should give priority to the royal family in this case, no?"

"Though what you said is also a fair argument, even if only I was left alone, the probability of safely escaping is not high. It's more meaningful for both of us to be alive. Again, don't be reserved from now on."

Words of reluctance didn't come to Shin's mind; he accepted Rionne's condition unwillingly.

The frowned Shin and the joyfully smiling Rionne were indeed opposite.

"This is only temporary until we escape."

"Mu! Well, there's no other way."

He also didn't forget to make it clear, "I'll do it since there's no one here".

"…Then let me say this while I have the opportunity."

Because she was slightly annoying, Shin decided to launch a little counterattack.

"I've seen them. In various ways."

"Hmm?"

Did she not understand what Shin was talking about? Rionne looked puzzled.

"Have you look at yourself after being caught by Gilslay?"

"Caught? ——KyaAH!!"

Rionne, who checked her own appearance after Shin's words, raised a cute voice and crouched down on the spot.

In addition to the equipment that was caught by Gilslay, she finally noticed that it melted her clothes too. Frankly speaking, there were almost no safe places.

Most of her arms and legs were bared, hotpants and so on in a very dangerous state. Only a portion of her body was safe. It was probably thanks to the double equipment of armor that consisted of dragon's leather and a jacket. It seemed to have prevented her clothes from melting completely.

Although there were holes here and there, given that Rionne was a woman, she had hardly shown it to other people.

The body fluids of Gilslay, which had durability reduction effects, seemed to accomplish its duty well to the last minute.

Was it because it was the body fluids of some fantasy creature? It may be a fortunate blessing in disguise that the skin had no injury. However, Shin was worried about the voice Rionne raised.

“Kyaah?”

“…Don’t look at me.”

“Ahh, sorry…for the time being, put this on.”

The figure of Rionne, which may have been visible and invisible, was very tempting for eyes.

This was embarrassing for Rionne too it seemed, as she was blushing and huddling herself up. Because it couldn’t be helped, Shin let Rionne put on the jacket he wore.

“For now, let’s enter the house over there. It’s bad to stay still here.”

“Okay.”

While Rionne, who was out of order and suddenly became meek, Shin pointed at a relatively decent abandoned house nearby.

Though there were no monsters around, it was better than being outside. Even though it was in the middle of a time-attack race, they were able to enter the isolated house.

Just in case, Shin activated [Barrier] without Rionne noticing. Then, an item card was taken out from his chest pocket. Of course, it was actually from the Item Box.

“First of all, change into this. It should be better than what you currently have on.”

The item card was materialized, and presented out to Rionne.

It was the equipment items which had been stored in the Item Box. Because he couldn’t hand over powerful things, the equipment’s rank was low, but since it was strengthened by Shin, it was several times more powerful than those of which were sold in the market, without exception.

What he handed over was a shirt made of rockworm thread, a jacket that used the skin of a black buffalo, and a pair of pants that was made of orb-weaving spider string. As for the appearance, it was a simple plain white shirt, a light brown jacket, and black pants.

“Thank you, do you always have this with you, Shin?”

“Pretty much. There’s a saying, save for a rainy day, save for a time of need, at the place where I’m from.”

Shin said. Just in case Rionne didn’t understand the saying, he made sure to say his hometown.

“It’s a good expression. Still, to possess so many item cards…”

“Acquaintances…Wait, I’m sorry, but I don’t mean to tell you any information about this. It’s sort of an agreement.”

Instead of taking all the responsibility, Shin hinted it as if he obtained it from a personal connection.

“I got it. Not all Chosen Ones are Item Box carriers. I don’t think of trying to pry into you thoughtlessly. It’s just enviable, I think.”

Every item skill were no match compared to the usefulness of an Item Box.

Its carrying capacity was very useful in many fields such as business and military affairs. Rionne was in a preferable direction, since she wasn’t persistent.

“By the way, Shin, though it’s a little rude to ask, I wonder if there are a bit more comfortable clothes that I can borrow?”

“Oh, was it torn anywhere?”

“Well, no? It’s a bit tight.”

“Tight? …Ah.”

When Shin pondered over Rionne’s words, he noticed the meaning behind those words.

The size of the equipment which Shin handed to Rionne was fitted to Shin’s physique. Because a size adjustment function was not included in low-grade equipment, he deliberately disabled the function so he wasn’t suspected.

However, a problem appeared as the result. Mainly on the chest measurement.

“……”

“Hey, what are you looking at?”

“Oh, nothing.”

Shin had glanced at Rionne’s chest, which seemed to be able to burst out of her shirt at any moment because she buttoned up forcibly.

Furthermore, the bottom half of her chest was pushed up. The top half was left open, so now there was a deep cleavage to look down into. In the case of general mass production of clothes, it may be in the right size until there. However, this time, what Rionne wore was equipment that matched with Shin’s physique.

The size adjustment function was adjusted along the line of the body, so Shin, who was classified as a thin man, had no need for room at the chest at all.

The shirt may have been no problem if it was an average sized shirt, but when a pair of hills that were bigger than the average like Rionne’s, there was not enough to hold it in various ways. Additionally, the length of the sleeves were too long; even the joints of her fingers were covered. Her appearance was sensational, in a different meaning than from a while ago. Rather than it becoming shabby equipment, it became cool to see, but only the fingers were outside the long sleeve.

“I’m sorry but the sizes of the clothes are helpless.”

“Muu! There’s no choice, huh?”

Shin didn't have the intention to tell the truth at the moment, so he decided to say it was helpless.

The reason was by no means a delight for his eyes if she stayed as is.

"Putting that aside, what was that a while ago?"

"That?"

"When you suddenly went "KyaAH!?" before."

"Wha!? Such a shameless appearance has been seen! I guess it's not possible to stay dignified.

Rionne protested, but there was no intimidating feeling while her face was dyed in red.

"Is being shy is a common thing?"

"…It's a way of speaking when I got mixed up in something."

Rionne, who heard Shin's remark, scowled at him lightly.

"Well, because there's an image that a lady's maid helps to change the clothes of royal families and nobles, I thought you were fine even if you are seen."

Because there were such scenes in manga and novels he read before, Shin thought that Rionne would also be so.

"Having a lady's maid to help change my clothes and having been seen by a man in an improper appearance– there's no way that it's the same!"

“You say so but don’t you usually notice when your clothes are in tatters that much? I thought it was certainly so, because you were so dignified to that extent.”

“I was focusing on the fight!”

From the slime’s strength to the power of Shin’s card [Flare Burst], she should have had enough to be surprised at; even if her clothes came off completely, it couldn’t be helped.

“Also, I am a woman. I can scream too.”

“I don’t mean that, what I want to say is that you are not feminine. Until now, you had a different image. Look, you don’t feel scared when you fought against Ghillie Wize, right? Therefore you are not really similar to my impression of you.”

Shin didn’t know Rionne that much. However, from her attitude until now, the impression of her was dignified was strong.

“…I have no need to keep up appearances. This tone is my personality. I’m aware that it’s hard to say it’s charming as a woman. I’m a woman whose job is to fight.”

“No wait! Why are you being so down for? If you said you’re not attractive, you will make all the women in the world your enemy!”

Because the story deviated towards a strange direction, in order to change the mood, Shin spoke the lines he heard somewhere.

Of course, that was reality.

Though Shin has seen a lot of beautiful girls, it didn't feel unnatural to put Rionne along with beauties like Schnee and Tiera.

Rionne was more than beautiful enough, though she didn't seem aware of it. From Shin's point of view, he couldn't understand why she became so servile.

"The ability as a warrior and being of royal lineage. There's not much I can boast about. Not only am I useless in political marriage, I'm also powerless against enemy monsters."

"You know, you have looked very down for a while now. What's the matter?"

After they entered the house to take a rest, her thoughts were too negative.

Shin understood that it was not the type of atmosphere to laugh or make fun of, as he tightened his expression himself.

"It's the fight just now. I couldn't even put a scratch."

Even though it could be said that she was the one that gave the final blow, it seemed to be caused by the fact that she wasn't able to do almost anything to Gilslay.

"I would say a while ago is the question of compatibility. If you had known the physical attacks didn't work, it would have been a different battle."

"It's certainly so. However, if a similar opponent appeared, there's nothing I could do. If it was only me alone, this time is…"

Shin was worried about how to speak to Rionne, who was now discouraged.

The problem that resulted in having the power of an upper class Chosen One was that it was likely that she had never fought against such a difficult opponent. However, since they have to act together from now on, he couldn't leave her as is.

"…Hey Rionne, can't you use a magic skill? If you can use it, you can fight without being repelled."

"That's right. I'm not at my elder sister's level, but I can use several magic skills of elementary level. However, can that affect the enemy in some way or another?"

"Only the elementary levels are usable, huh? Well then…"

It didn't mean there was nothing she could do about it. If physical attacks didn't work, one should go with the bestowed attribute instead of the physical attribute as the weapon.

Magic and martial arts. If Rionne could use both skills, a combination skill may be usable, and even if she couldn't use them, there was a little loophole path too.

The problem was whether he should tell her or not.

While Shin has encountered some things in this world, the people who could use combination skills were limited. Because of that, he didn't know how combination skills were treated in this world.

Even a mere skill was valuable. A combination skill was unleashed using two or more skills, and it didn't appear to be common.

On this occasion, he decided to ask it from Schnee.

"(Schnee, is it alright to talk now?)"

"(No problem. Is there anything you need?)"

"(I want to confirm something; nowadays, how are combination skills treated?)"

"(Combination skill, huh? I would say it's valuable, but it's not strange for a Chosen One to be able to use it. However, the number of people who can use it are quite limited.)"

Shin briefly talked about the current situation, because he didn't have much time.

Schnee, who guessed the situation, shared her knowledge about the skills. Living more than 500 years in this world, she covered all of the information to this degree.

"(If I'm a Chosen One, is it alright to teach it?)"

"(I think it's alright. If you are an upper class Chosen One, it isn't strange to have multiple combination skills.)"

"(I'm saved)"

Apparently, there was no problem.

He had no doubt if it was information from Schnee, and decided to give advice to Rionne about the skills.

Rionne herself was not a bad person, and she couldn't protect the country if she was left alone in this condition.

"Hey Rionne, may I ask which magic skills you can use?"

"Magic skills? I don't mind."

As a person who seemed to already know, they just started to get acquainted with each other.

So to add one thing to another, Rionne gave away the skills' names. As for Shin, he explored the combination of Rionne's martial arts skills and the magic skills she had told him.

However, as expected, she didn't have a clue about her skill, 「Full Moon Edge」, which was classified as a combination of elementary level magic skills and Ouden rank martial arts skills.

Not only was its balance bad, but also, combination skills that used elementary level magic were few in numbers.

"There's no helping it. I guess we're going with an imitation, huh?"

"Imitation?"

Shin, who was lost in thought for a while, decided to teach a method of giving an attribute to a physical attack, although it wasn't a combination skill.

If he found out the information of other martial arts skills that Rionne could use, there might be some good combinations too. However, he'd like to stop the act of uncovering everything of the other party's skills.

"Just checking, but Rionne, you can't use combination skills… right?"

"Indeed, my magic skills haven't reached the level where they can't be used as combination skills. I tried many different ways though."

"Then, have you tried this method?"

Shin explained the method to bestow a false attribute.

It was not a legitimate way, so its power was inevitably diminished compared to the real thing, but it was still powerful enough.

"Can I really be able to go with that?"

"You will know once you try it. I also only knew about this by chance."

"Okay, let's try it."

Rionne then activated the basis of flame technique system magic skill 【Fire】.

Thereupon, near the poised 『Muspelm』, a flame about 30 cemels appeared. When she maintained the state as described by Shin, the flame was gradually absorbed by 『Muspelm』, and its blade turned red.

“Look!”

The foot of the chair which Shin suddenly threw was cut off by『Muspelm』without any resistance; it was like cutting tofu.

The cut surface scorched; it was clearly understood that heat was added to the blade. Although the proper support magic skill 【Enchant Fire】somewhat lacked thermal power when compared to combination skills with flame techniques, the effect of the bestowed attribute was still obvious. At least with this, it would be much better than the light attribute.

“What kind of state is this?”

For Rionne, who couldn’t use support and combination skills, she seemed unable to comprehend the current phenomenon just yet.

Since it was placed as an underhanded trick in the game era too, it was no wonder she didn’t understand it.

“Well this, if I have to say, is 【Imitation-type Fire】. I don’t know its formal name either. Please keep in mind it’ll break low-grade weapons when it’s applied there. At least《Legend》grade weapons are still needed, and overuse of this is strictly prohibited. Even without the application of personal skills, there are a lot of things that can be done with that.”

“…I understand it vaguely, but was it okay to teach me? This is an undiscovered technique, you know?”

“In this world, the strength of monsters exceeds humans. If such a technique spreads out, there will be fewer victims too. Are you unhappy or something?”

“Very unhappy. You’re only giving it to me, aren’t you Shin?”

Rionne wasn’t convinced at the immature soteriology.

The application and the diversity of the technique that Shin taught, she probably had understood it accurately.

“I tried and understood it, Shin. This can be applied to arts too. You may even use a low durability weapon if it’s an arts, there are many usages besides battle as well. The value of this information is higher than a Geyl gold coin, do you understand?”

“I understand it even without you making such a scary face, Rionne. Isn’t it fine? You obtained so much valuable information. Shouldn’t you be pleased as a royal family?”

While calming Rionne who approached seriously, Shin told the reason.

“But, that is…”

“It’s not convincing, huh? Then——”

Let’s give her a good reason.

“Protect. I want to protect all the countries, people, and myself.”

“That’s the equivalent price,” Shin finished it while staring at Rionne.

“Shin, you…”

Rionne thought there was a secret in Shin's speech, but she was at a loss for words.

Rionne felt as if Shin was completely making up excuses.

——Therefore.

(Crap! I said it like that to deceive her, but in fact, it wasn't so useful and was treated as a joke. When such a look of respect was directed at me, the sense of guilt is incredible!)

Rionne wasn't aware of the things going on in Shin's mind.

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"I've accepted your reasons, Shin. I'll put it to good use without fail!"

Rionne, who didn't know the truth, firmly clenched her fists and expressed her determination.

Something like eyes on fire could be felt from her.

"First of all, have you recovered?"

"You can count on me. The me a while ago is already gone!"

"Though this is a bad place to display your motivation as we will be avoiding battle, you know?"

"I will bear that in mind, whatever the circumstances may be. Please take care of me."

Though Shin was worried whether the revived Rionne would want to rush the race or not, as expected it didn't go to that extent.

However, should one say 'as expected?' Her spirit was quite high.

"When I'm together with Shin, it makes me think various stuff. I have thought that the talk about engagement is not bad either."

"I've a fiancee. Give me a break!"

He had a feeling that the distance between each other was gradually diminishing, and Shin couldn't settle down in the difficult situation.

Though Rionne was a little surprised about how he had a fiancee, she didn't have the intention to uselessly talk further, and their travel went smoothly.

On the way, when they reached the closest point to the heart of the city, Shin saw something like haze spread out in the center of the Sacred Place.

"What is that?"

The anxious Shin informed Rionne in a few words to see if it was possible to move to a better place on the street and observe the central part using a skill.

Since the central part of the city was slightly higher than the surroundings, they could see it without even without getting on a roof.

Though there were ruins everywhere in the Sacred Place, only the building in the center remained intact. Shin also remembered it faintly because he often came there when the game had just begun.

When he looked back at the haze again, for an instant, something seemed to move inside it.

“What? There’s something there?”

In order to ascertain its identity, Shin stared at it motionlessly.

In several seconds, the moment when something began moving in the haze again, and Shin was assaulted by a sense that seemed to pull him into the haze.

“Uwah!?”

He lost his balance in the abrupt situation, but recovered quickly.

“What’s the matter? You suddenly raised your voice.”

“No, I had the feeling of being sucked in, but it’s alright now.”

At the moment he lost his balance, when he looked again in the haze, he felt nothing in particular.

If he said that it was because he was leaning forward too much and nearly fell because he was staring at one point for a long time, she would have been convinced.

“Shin, I don’t feel anything though?”

“Just what on earth was that?”

Will a similar thing happen? Although Shin watched the haze for a while, the sense he felt in the beginning didn't come back in the end.

"I'm sorry for making you wait. Now, let's go."

"Is it alright? Aren't you interested, Shin?"

"I'll come by again even if I don't go now. In this situation, I don't have any intentions to say anything more selfish."

With the princess, he couldn't investigate the dangerous Sacred Place thoughtlessly.

Shin reaffirmed his priority, and both of them resumed their travel.

Then, in the place where they had transposed for more than three times, Shin and Rionne finally reached at the plaza that existed inside the southern gate.

While being alert of their surroundings just in case, they moved to an alley path to leave the gate and there was nothing stopping them like the teleporting fiasco from before.

"Somehow we have reached the goal. There's no need to worry about the route anymore."

"Indeed, with this we escaped at last."

If Rionne's story was true, the southern gate seemed to be the gate which was used when Sacred Place was investigated, so they decided to go toward it right away.

“That’s the place.”

Before long, in front of Shin and Rionne, the southern gate of Kalkia revealed itself.

A portion of it was hidden by buildings from the plaza space, but its appearance didn’t change since the game era. It was a solid gate which had defense magic bestowed upon it.

“Wait a minute!…”

Nevertheless, what leaked from Shin’s mouth was a voice of disappointment.

Because the side entrance was for palace guard usage, the door Rionne meant to go through was crushed and buried. The side entrance was more fragile than the main wall, so it was not strange for it to break. However, it was clear that it didn’t collapse naturally.

“I wonder if this is an accidental attack to the side entrance by a fight between monsters?”

“There are some scars in addition to the side entrance, but it’s still unknown with only this.”

Visually on the surface of the side entrance, it was in a state like a cement was poured and hardened.

Even if Shin gently tapped on it, only a feeling of a rigidness was returned. The surface was easy to blow off, but if it was firmly filled in on the inside; it would be the same for the walls. One

could see it was hardened in a similar way, as the cement, which fortified the side entrance, was widely used in the surroundings.

“Now that it has come to this, we must climb up the gate; also… what is that?”

When Shin just thought about climbing the gate forcibly as the last resort, he saw a strange thing come into view from the ordinary sky and spread out on the wall which enclosed the Sacred Place.

“I don’t know about this either.”

Similarly, Rionne turned her attention to the sky muttered.

“Is it a barrier?”

When Shin looked around, a dome shape covered the town, and a semi-transparent thin coat was being developed.

Because it resembled the state when 【Wall】 and 【Barrier】were being erected, Shin predicted that it was some kind of barrier.

In the game era, except during events, flying-type monsters couldn’t enter the town. So in this world, it could be said that there was protection developed before their eyes.

“Shall I try a little experiment?”

When Shin picked up a pebble which dropped at his feet, he threw it with all his might toward the sky.

The stone, which was shot by the physical strength of an upper class Chosen One, flew to the top of the wall without losing

power and hit the thin coat. The result was slightly different from Shin's expectations when the electricity made a noise that sounded like a short-circuiting, *Crackle*, and the stone crumbled in an instant.

While the stone was falling, it lost to air resistance and disintegrated in midair; it became sand and blew with the wind.

"Leaving from the top of the wall will be difficult."

"You're right. It's not possible to touch that carelessly."

Rionne also agreed with Shin's opinion.

Though it was uncertain how much electrical output the erected barrier had, there's no doubt it wouldn't end without someone getting burned.

If Shin used all of his power, he may be able to break the barrier, but he couldn't do so in front of Rionne, so he decided to keep that as a last resort under the current situation.

"Can't we use other gates?"

"Only this place was secured in case of an invasion. There are dangerous monsters, so I cannot afford to open the gate leisurely. Thinking about the unlikely event, this is the only place. Besides, the side entrances from the other gates have probably collapsed from the beginning due to the impact of natural disasters. It's a different story for a small animal, but there's no gap for a person to pass."

The findings of Sacred Places seemed to be shared among the countries; Rionne knew in details.

“Then, do I need to break through the site gate forcibly? Is there no other choice but to open the very gate itself?”

The gate’s opening and shutting mechanism was located inside the wall and the entrance was through the side entrance; it was said that the methods to open a gate were a common everywhere.

Even if the part which leads to the outside has been destroyed, there was a possibility that the room with the opening and shutting mechanism was safe. Because they couldn’t move in the southern gate because of the current state it was in, both of them decided to leave for the eastern gate.

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“…Strange.”

“Hmm? What it is?”

Rionne asked about the words that she happened to overhear during their travel.

“Most of the monsters’ presences have disappeared. I was going to choose the route with the fewest monsters if possible, but no matter how I look at it, there are no presences at all.”

When Shin felt uncomfortable, he turned his attention to the map; there were already several monsters dwelling in the Sacred Place. That number was greatly reduced than the ones he had perceived when they were heading toward the southern gate and were being transposed.

Although Ghillie Wize was defeated by Shin and Rionne, it should be no more than a 'pouring water on a hot stone' level.

"It's certainly strange, but it has become easier to travel in this way, so isn't it fine?"

"I hope so too, but because of the difference of information in various ways, I can't help but foretell something dangerous will happen after this."

Even if the side entrance of the southern gate was crushed as an accident, the top of the wall had a barrier to prevent anyone from escaping.

The contact was completely cut off from the outside world; it seemed to be trying to confine those who were inside.

"Then, all the more reason to escape quickly. Hurry up!"

"An enemy may appear suddenly. Don't let your guard down, Rionne."

It was only an unpleasant premonition, but there was no reason to waste time either; Shin and Rionne raised their running pace.

As a better alternative to the shortcut of going on the roof, due to the dangers of being found by monsters and risks of houses

collapsing, they advanced through the way along the wall obediently. In the process, Shin noticed certain things.

“…Isn’t the wall somewhat shining?”

“It’s seems so. I’ve never seen such a phenomenon before.”

At first he thought it was just his imagination, but now it was clearly shining; it was emitted from the wall which stood towering over the surroundings of their flank.

Two colors, ice blue and emerald-green, flowed to the front of Shin and Rionne as they blended together.

“Hey…at this rate, I have a bad feeling about going straight.”

“I agree. However, there’s no place for us to escape to, right? If that’s the case, it’s better to check what’s going on, and then think of a way to countermeasure from there.

“The exit has been blocked. Even if we avoid danger here, there’s no point,” Rionne said.

“It seems so, but I think most humans would want to avoid trouble, don’t you agree?”

Shin joked, as he failed to remember any information about the phenomenon that occurred in front of them.

If there was such a flashy event, it should be caught somewhere in his memory. If there wasn’t, it became a situation which was unknown during the game era.

“I don’t get it, not. Well, look Shin!”

Coming into the wryly smiling Rionne's view and Shin who was talking jokingly, the eastern gate was visible.

Apparently, a torrent of light seemed to flow to the eastern gate from the north side.

"Did it gather in the gate? …If it gets slightly nearer, it's better to hide ourselves and observe."

He didn't know whether the same thing happened in all gates and decided to stay here for safety.

In front of the gate, the road where they ran along the wall and the main road merged and became a small plaza.

Shin and Rionne entered an inn that was facing the street, and observed the gate from a window on the top floor.

"There's something like a huge ball."

A huge blue sphere appeared in front of the gate.

By a rough estimate of 5 mels in diameter, luminous green occasionally ran through on its surface. The mana that moved along the wall could also confirm that it was flowing into the sphere.

"Shin, is this change caused by that?"

"Maybe. I've never seen something like this, but it feels like the time when a monster is born, don't you agree?"

A monster spawned from mana in this world. Shin thought Rionne may have seen it, so he asked.

“No, when a monster is born from accumulating mana power, the scene is warped and takes the monster’s form. Then, it appears by breaking out of the shell. As for a sphere like that, I’ve never seen one.”

“If so, does it mean it’s not an ordinary monster? Or is it not a monster to begin with?”

While looking at the sphere, which was stationary, Shin thought, ‘what is that sphere?’

On Shin’s map, the sphere was displayed with a green marker. This represented neutrality.

However, even if a marker was usually green, there were monsters which turned to red when a player approached, which represented an enemy, so he couldn’t relax his guard.

“For now, I should change to my original equipment. Rionne, here.”

Shin changed his equipment with a shortcut function. It was the Dark King series which he wore during the duel against Girard.

Black coat and trousers, red arm guards and leg guards, and a muffler with a red line like lightning bolt; Shin wore so much protective gear that not a scratch could be dealt if hit by a half-assed attack.

Apart from that, Shin materialized a pair of gauntlets and handed it over to Rionne.

“This is?”

“It’s called ‘Gauntlets of Moribito’, it raises the resistance to magic and abnormality statuses for the equipped person. Its best effect is when the equipped person is about to receive a fatal blow, it’ll become a sacrifice, but only once. I don’t know what will happen in the future, so please equip it just in case.”

“Is this alright? It seems quite a valuable thing to me.”

Rionne, while listening to Shin, turned her attention to the gauntlets.

As for its appearance, the material used was orichalcum, although it was mostly silver in color and close to iron gauntlets. The red pattern on its surface was drawn with paint of mithril and scarletite ingot, which was dissolved by a special method. Self-repair was also possible if not destroyed completely.

Even though the gauntlets were 《Legend》 grade, it had been reinforced by Shin, so its strength was close to 《Mythology》 grade. High defensive power combined with a sacrifice effect was demonstrated when the gauntlets were used as a shield during a critical moment.

“It’s alright because I have these arm guards. Though, even my clothes are far sturdier than armor, I tend to be a puzzle a lot this time. I said it a while ago, ‘save for a rainy day, save for a time of need’.”

Shin raised his crimson red arm guard equipment with both arms himself, and spoke to Rionne.

That so-called Dark King's Arm Guards have the effect of preventing the skill with an effect such as trap and theft. Also, there is even the effect of reflecting back a portion of the damage; Gauntlets of Moribito's performance was not on a par with the arm guards.

"…Understood. I'll use it gratefully."

When Rionne put on the gauntlets, it shone slightly and its size changed to fit her hands.

"I was worried about the size, but this is really cool!"

"This is my treasured item, so return it later."

"Got it. However, I feel like I'm being protected by you somehow, Shin."

"You're joking—— and as we continue talking, there is movement within the sphere."

"Are those cracks?"

Urged by Shin, Rionne also turned her eyes to the sphere.

The cracks on the surface of the sphere were spreading gradually, reminding the scene of an egg hatching.

"Indeed, I have a feeling that something will be born after this, Shin."

"It looks like it. Besides, the wall that shone until a while ago is restored now. Maybe its duty has been finished."

Shin looked up at the wall.

Was it a place for the mana to pour into the sphere? The possible cause that he could think of was that the wall or the entire city was becoming some kind of device.

Shin didn't know of any existences that could do so such a feat. If this was in the game, it would be management and the GM, but if they still existed now, "Return me to the original world quickly," was what he would likely say.

What was the meaning of this phenomenon in this case? When he thought about it, Shin suddenly felt the sense of being dragged into the center of the Sacred Place similarly to a while ago. Shin thought that this might be related.

"——Shin, it came out!"

"It came, huh?…"

There was movement in the sphere before his thoughts were being settled.

When Shin returned his view towards the sphere, the cracks that were spreading little by little already had its whole surface covered. Light began to emit from several places, and flickering ominous light informed them that some kind of existence was moving inside.

Chapter 4.

Part 1.

Shin and Rionne shifted their gazes toward the sphere. About a minute later, the globe finally reached its limit.

“KyuAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA!”

A huge cry was raised together with the sound of something similar to glass cracking, and something broke out of the sphere.

“What is that?”

Rionne appeared to have never seen the emerging monster.

“…Looks like a Gryphon.”

“Gryphon?”

“It’s a monster that usually inhabits the forest or highlands.”

While Shin explained, he activated [Analyze].

————『Guardian of rbh%t& Lv$%&』

“It has garbled letters, huh?… A Guardian?”

Barely readable portions of the name were displayed, and Shin looked puzzled while tilting his head.

There was a monster with a ‘Guardian’ prefix attached to their name. However, it was a huge golem with full body armor that would appear in the city and become the base of the players. On top of that, it didn’t come out unless there was a special event.

The current Gryphon before them had crystal wings. Because the wings were made of transparent blue ice and had an angular-shape, it had a solid feeling that living things didn't have.

"Is that ice?"

Shin judged that those wings were composed of ice crystals, as he saw the cold wave of air released by the wing of the Gryphon, who was generating white mist around it.

When observed carefully, ice also covered its talons up to its foreleg and the horn that had grown from its forehead. Though they were the same base color as its wings, there was also green blended into several places.

A portion of the ground near the Gryphon was already frozen. Was it due to the influence of the ice on its forelegs?

"……."

"Shin, is there something wrong?"

"…No, it certainly resembles a monster I know, but it's slightly different."

The monster was similar to 'Glass-Blue Gryphon'. It was a monster that appeared in ice and snow zones.

However, a Glass-Blue Gryphon had its whole body made of crystal-like glass, which was different than the Gryphon that had just appeared. To begin with, Shin didn't know of any kind of Gryphon that exceeded 5 mels in body height.

"It's looking this way!"

The Gryphon, which raised a roar, turned its gaze to the direction where Shin and Rionne were.

Since their eyes met perfectly, it's not possible to say it was just their imagination.

"Kyuiiiiiiiiiiiiiii!!"

"Mu! Is it up to something?"

"It's bad to stay here, so I'll break the wall!"

At the same time as the shout, Shin broke through the wall in the room and jumped outside.

Rionne followed soon after, and the breath of ice which the Gryphon released hit the building directly. The building was frozen in an instant.

The Gryphon seemed to have seen that Shin and Rionne escaped, as it turned its neck while breathing out ice in order to put them in the line of fire.

"That's dangerous! We're gonna jump!"

"Kyaa, what!?"

Shin carried Rionne and kicked through the air against the looming breath of ice.

He dodged the breath mid-air by a movement system martial arts skill [Flying Shadow], and jumped into the shadow of another building.

“It’s a ‘mowing down’ breath, huh? I’m sure there’s no such attack used by gryphons…”

“I-Is that so? Rather, Shin, I want you to lower me down now.”

Rionne said, while stuttering in Shin’s arm.

The current body pose of Rionne was commonly referred to as ‘holding the princess in one’s arms’ state.

“Ah sorry. It was emergency, so it was either this or I carry you under my arm.”

When Shin pulled Rionne’s arm and evaded the breath, he was able to hold her under his arm, but as expected that may be inappropriate for a princess, so he changed it.

“You really…so what would you do? We cannot go near it since it attacked as soon as we showed up.”

“That kind of attack is a breathing spell or magic power charge; there will be a cooldown-time when the attack is used somewhere, so we have no choice but to attack at once. I will take charge of the front, so aim for its back while hiding in the building, Rionne.”

Though it was a surprise attack, Shin knew the capture method of a Gryphon himself.

Even if he was directly hit with the breath, he shouldn’t be killed on the spot.

“Will you be alright?”

“Leave it to me. I don’t want to be hit, but I’ve a way even if I’m hit.”

The worrying Rionne nodded, and Shin stood up.

After seeing Rionne off, who was moving away from him, he jumped outside the building.

“KyuAAAA!!”

The Gryphon promptly shot its breath.

As if it knew Shin was there, its aim was accurate.

Shin bent over and evaded the breath coming straight at him, then started to run.

Though the Gryphon made a mowing down motion with its breath like it was natural, a similar attack wouldn’t become a threat to Shin.

Using both movement system martial arts skills 【Flying Shadow】 and 【Shukuchi】, Shin sometimes jumped over and dove under as he closed in upon the Gryphon without slowing down.

“Hey, hey I’m here. Where are you aiming at!?”

While exercising one of the taunt skills, 【Clown Noise】, Shin stirred up the Gryphon aloud.

Did the Gryphon determine that its breath wouldn’t hit as it saw Shin’s movements? The Gryphon aimed at Shin with its left foreleg. Shin then intercepted the talons made of ice with his『Kakura』. Taking advantage of his strength, from the lower

position he hammered onto the lowered foreleg to reach a conclusion.

“Kyui!!”

“Whoa!!”

The Gryphon and Shin rallied each other, and were both surprised at the weight of the opponent’s blow.

When『Kakura』was pressured by the talons of ice, Shin jumped back at once.

“This is not the physical strength of a Gryphon…”

The Gryphon in the game era was not such a strong monster to that degree.

Though it also depended on the kind, level 600 was the highest; it was an opponent with insufficient power to be considered a formidable enemy.

Yet, the current opponent didn’t appear so.

Shin’s STR was more than 500, although it was being controlled by【Limit】. If he added the weapon compensation of『Kakura』, his STR would be close to 600.

With that being easily overwhelmed, Shin concluded that the Gryphon’s STR was more than 700.

“Did I underestimate it? Its power is also strong. I can’t talk to Rionne either, huh?”

Shin lowered the 「Limit」 to II, as he muttered and scolded himself for being deceived by the Gryphon's appearance. (T/N: The lower the Limit is, the stronger Shin gets. Currently his stats was divided by 2(II) from his original stats)

Though it was not a complete release, his stats still exceeded 999 in the time of the game. Unless it was a powerful boss monster, nothing could overcome the current Shin's attacks. As for why he didn't release the limit completely, it was because he couldn't estimate the power when attacking.

Unlike Schnee, right after Rionne was involved, neither evasion nor defense were possible. Similarly to the battle of the Lord Skull Face, this wasn't a situation where he could attack without thinking about the damage to the surroundings.

"If I can't defeat it with this, it is no joke."

Shin, in the same way as a while ago, started to attack the Gryphon.

The Gryphon, in response to that, raised its ice talons and was about to swoop down on Shin.

"*Hyaah!*"

"KyuAA!?"

Their yell sparked.

『Kakura』 and the ice talons struck each other directly——this time, the winner was 『Kakura』.

It couldn't endure Shin's overwhelming physical strength; the ice that covered the Gryphon's left foreleg burst and scattered. Still, did the ice become a cushion? The Gryphon's leg itself was safe. However, the Gryphon couldn't escape the impact, as it had its leg lifted and stumbled back a step or two.

"Tch!"

Nevertheless, the moment the ice covered leg was smashed, Shin was surprised to see that the scattered ice that flew transformed into spears, and Shin missed the opportunity to continue the attack.

"The ice covering its legs is not an ordinary ice——tto!"

Shin, who witnessed the unexpected ability, dodged the extra ice spears that flew toward him.

The origin of the current ice spears were the Gryphon's wings. From the large wings, which were unfolded, various small and large ice spears colored blue and green were scattered around to block Shin's escape route.

Gryphon's movement became sluggish, as there seemed to be damage to some extent.

"KyI!"

When the Gryphon made a cry sound, ice covered its left foreleg again.

The awkward movement of its left foot was restored accordingly. Apparently, its fighting power didn't seem to fall at the place where he smashed it.

"Next is a barrage of breaths, huh?"

While crushing the ice spears with『Kakura』, Shin attracted the Gryphon's attention again.

On the edge of his view, he confirmed the figure of Rionne creeping up the back of the Gryphon. As Shin changed his standing position, he examined the attack range of the Gryphon.

The range of the Gryphon's neck movements limited the breath attack's direction. Also, it could only shoot the ice spears forward, and when Shin went around to its side, he wasn't attacked. Though ice talons were equipped on both front and back legs, Rionne should have seen the situation where Shin destroyed the talons.

She should be able to take the Gryphon by surprise now.

"I should have its attention just in case."

Shin exercised a taunt skill[Shura Rush] when he confirmed that Rionne was ready with her『Muspelm』behind the Gryphon.

Even though there weren't any other monsters around, he didn't know when they would appear. Therefore, using a taunt skill to attract the attention of a wide-ranging enemy would overwrite the [Clown Noise], which collected only a single opponent's hate;

he decided to thwart the possibility of Rionne receiving a surprise attack reversely.

“KyuA!”

“That’s right, look here!”

While adding sporadic attacks, Shin fixed the position of the Gryphon.

Then, the moment the Gryphon spread its wings in order to release ice spears, Rionne started her move.

“——Hyaah!”

『Muspelm』, which gave off a vivid orange effect, hit directly on the joint of the right wing.

However, the wing seemed to have more strength than it appeared, for even with one or two katanas used to cut it, the wing was hardly damaged.

“HyaAAAAA!!”

A yell that contained a noticeable fighting spirit accompanied by a striking blow, she somehow succeeded in giving the Gryphon’s wing a small wound.

However, it didn’t restrict the Gryphon’s movement. Rionne continued as it was, attacking the back of the raging Gryphon. Arcs were drawn continuously, as the orange-colored effect covered『Muspelm』.

The rate of Rionne swinging『Muspelm』was faster than usual, and the power also increased proportionally to the speed.

Its fur also seemed to have high defensive power, as the Gryphon received almost no damage. However, if its back was attacked, which was the blind spot taken by Rionne, who was a melee-type Chosen One, even the Gryphon couldn't move properly. Though it tried to shake her off, it wasn't very successful.

The reason why Rionne could one-sidedly attack the Gryphon was because, besides it being caught off guard, she invoked fencing technique system martial arts skill 【Tyrant Beat】.

While she couldn't use magic skills during the invocation, she raised her offensive ability and attack speed up to 1.4 times as compensation; it was a skill that dealt a stun effect for a very short time to the opponent every time the attack hit.

Even if the effect period was very short, when the condition was met, one-sidedly crushing down the opponent was possible. It was often used in the game era by players whose occupation emphasised physical attacks.

"Ugh, my skill ended! Sorry, but I'll leave it to you now!"

"Got it!"

The Gryphon's behind and the back of its neck, which were hacked at recklessly, were leaking little-amounts of blue mist from its wounds.

When looked at closely, it was like a blue spray that spewed out from the wounds. It didn't appear to be a liquid, as it faded and disappeared in the air when it rose 30 cemels like steam.

"Is something leaking!? No, does the body fluid evaporate?"

Shin, who looked at the Gryphon's state made inferences on the phenomenon he had never seen.

"GRUUUUU!!"

With Rionne separated away, the Gryphon flapped its wings in a big way and turned toward Shin.

Its four legs had firmly stepped on the ground. Its HP was almost recovered when he looked at the Gryphon with [Analyze].

Because the level displayed was garbled, it was difficult to determine what level the monster was, but he expected level 800 or more from the amount of damage received. Though animal-type monsters typically didn't have high defensive power, it seemed that this didn't apply to the Gryphon in front of him.

"This guy is a nuisance."

While provoking it so Rionne wasn't targeted, Shin resumed his attacks on the Gryphon.

He aimed at the parts which weren't covered in ice. As Shin passed through the ice spears unleashed from the Gryphon, he swung『Kakura』vigorously at its body. What was returned was a heavy feeling like beating a large mass of rubber.

"KyII!!?"

The Gryphon's body recoiled sideways, and the place where『Kakura』stroked was hollowed out greatly.

While the Gryphon was hit by『Kakura』, which unleashed its slashing attack power as if to cut up the enemy, it wasn't the end for the Gryphon.

"GRUUU…"

Even if a normal living thing who had received that blow would have their internal organs destroyed, the Gryphon only raised a menacing growl.

Rather than the sound come from receiving damage, it was a cry that one could feel an annoying vexation from.

“Shin! Are you okay?!”

Rionne shouted from the rear of the Gryphon.

“No problem here! Don’t come to the front because of the heavy barrage!”

Shin shouted back.

The strength of the ice spears released by its wings was higher than what a half-baked weapon could produce. Even though the intensity had declined over time, the ice spears still pierced through the orichalcum paved road like the tentacles of Gilslay. In some cases, there was also a possibility that they could not be defended against with『Muspelm』.

“If the main body is made of ice, then how about this?”

Shin, who was dodging the Gryphon’s attack, took out a card and tossed it to the sky while shouting,

“Release 「Flare Burst」!”

The card was torn and a bluish-white sphere was summoned in response to Shin’s shout.

What he threw to the sky was a shot from the front, because the possibility of it being dodged was high.

“KyUAA!?”

Did it feel the magic power in the sphere? The Gryphon raised a voice of caution. Ice spears which came flying toward the sphere

were repelled, and the sign of breath forming could be seen in its mouth.

In the short time after it was launched, heat rays were fired from the sphere. Although Shin could also attack the Gryphon himself at the same time as he tossed the sphere, the effect of the magic may have weakened when Shin approached.

Therefore, Shin materialized 4 one-handed knives made of orichalcum, gripped them between his fingers and threw them.

If it was a synchronized attack from the top and the front, lowering the possibility of either being evaded.

“Shin?”

Rionne was watching Shin’s movements, but expressed her doubt.

It was mostly because the knives Shin threw were greatly off the mark.

“KyUIII!!”

The Gryphon probably also thought he missed the mark. It repelled only two of them which came flying by its wings, and a breath was fired toward the approaching heat ray from the sky.

The snow-white breath collided with the bluish-white heat rays, offsetting each other. The power of the attacks were almost equal, neither one of them overwhelmed the other one-sidedly.

However, that state was only for an instant. The knives which were thrown in the wrong direction changed trajectory and pierced the stomach and the wing of the Gryphon.

“GyUA!”

The power of its breath diminished along with the scream.

Then, the heat ray overcame the breath and hit the Gryphon directly.

“GIIIIIIIIIII!?”

The Gryphon’s squeal reverberated through the sky of Kalkia.

Its left wing which it had promptly used as a shield was almost evaporated, and the left side of the Gryphon’s face was also burned hideously.

From the wing, which was mostly missing, and from the burnt skin, blue steam spouted out.

“What on earth was that just now…”

Rionne, who saw the knives whose trajectory changed at almost a right angle to pierce the Gryphon, muttered in a dumbfound state.

What Shin had done was called a throwing technique and wind combination skill 「Trick Throw」; it was a skill that made the trajectory of the thrown weapon go toward the target.

In this world where skills were extremely scarce, it may have been unusual for her.

“In that timing, there’s no way I could miss!”

In that single chance, Shin attacked the Gryphon which received damage and lost its balance.

As the breath was not usable as a result of half of its face being burnt, a barrage of ice spears came from its single wing; it was the ideal situation to come close.

“This time it won’t go like a while ago!”

Shin put up『Kakura』against a blow by the right forefoot of the Gryphon.

The Gryphon’s ice talons burst open together with a roaring sound. The flying ice spears which changed into ice debris were easy to deal with if one knew how to handle them.

As the attack of the forefoot was flicked away, if he turned around to the right side of the collapsed Gryphon’s face, the ice spears didn’t show any effect.

There, Shin brandished his『Kakura』.

“【Enchant Fire】”

Along with Shin’s mutter,『Kakura』was enveloped in flames.

Leaving a red trace in the air,『Kakura』struck on the Gryphon’s body directly.

With a thunderous sound that resembled an explosion, the Gryphon slid sideways for about 5 mels. The Gryphon’s talons scraped off the orichalcum pavement, and claw marks were

carved on the ground. Though the talons seemed to break easily due to Shin's attack, the strength of the ice talons were higher than a thin layer of orichalcum.

On the body where Shin hit, some kind of burnt traces remained. Blue steam also grandly leaked from there, as the wound had not burnt completely.

"Its HP condition decreased decently. That steam, is it different from bleeding and magic leakage?"

Shin thought while seeing the HP gauge of the Gryphon.

In case of the bleeding state, it should be the same as a poison; the HP should decrease intermittently. However, the Gryphon had not received any more damage than what Shin had dealt.

"Isn't it an abnormal state?"

Some of the monsters at boss class often had special attack methods.

In case of the golem group it was hand throwing, in the spector group it was summoning followers, the ability that reflected each of their characteristics were typical. Of course, there were exceptions among them, too.

What he could imagine from the steam gushing out from the wound was an ability of the type that takes time, and changes the environment to one where the boss could fight more easily. This was like a Black Spirit*; many of the monsters which mainly composed of magic attacks had it. (T/N1: Black Spirit is as it

sounds like, an RPG monster which is a Spirit)(T/N2: When it says ‘it’, it talks about the ability to change the environment)

“*Shoom*!”

The state of Shin and the Gryphon glaring at each other was probably to determine for a good opportunity.

From the blind spot of the Gryphon, Rionne again prepared with 『Muspelm』 and jumped out.

“KyUI?”

The attention of the Gryphon seemed to completely point toward Shin, it wasn’t able to cope with the surprise attack.

Rionne jumped onto the back of the Gryphon again, and exercised 「Tyrant Beat」. Leaving a trail of orange color, 『Muspelm』 was slammed against the Gryphon.

“GyII!”

The Gryphon which couldn’t bear it, screamed at Rionne who attacked mainly on the left half of its body which was badly burned.

Shin drew the attention of the Gryphon from the front without interfering with Rionne.

“Rionne! I don’t know whether there’s any effect from the steam coming out from the wound! Don’t let it touch you!”

“Got it!”

Rionne utilized the length of『Muspelm』's blade, wielding the sword skillfully so as to not touch the steam.

However, as time passed by, Rionne's movement became too dull to keep up. If one looked closely, the blue steam was clinging to Rionne's body before she was aware of it.

There was an indication of speed drop when he checked Rionne's status.

"It's a debuff system, huh?"

Shin, who had a bad hunch, immediately released cancellation of the weakening magic.

"【Cure All】!"

Though【Cure】was sufficient if it's a single abnormal state, Shin chose the most effective skill he had just in case.

The ability of the enemy whose effect he couldn't identify, he knew it from experience that it was good to be extra wary. The moment when Rionne had her movement back, she jumped off from the back of the Gryphon. Then the Gryphon waved its wing toward Rionne who was mid-air.

Rionne prevented a direct hit by using『Muspelm』as a shield. However, it was impossible for her to completely block the power in the air, and she was sent flying.

Rionne forcibly fixed her posture while mid-air and as she landed the ground was whittled down. Sparks scattered on the paved road and on『Muspelm』.

“Such power from only being hit by a wing, huh?…”

A muffled voice leaked from Rionne’s mouth.

Even though『Muspelm』became a shield, she was sent flying for about 10 mels by the Gryphon. Even if there was almost no damage, the burden on her body was immeasurable.

“I’ll get its attention! Go into a building for a moment!”

Shin shouted and invoked flame system magic skill【Smoke Bomb】.

A black globe appeared in the air and rushed toward the Gryphon.

“KyUA!”

Though the Gryphon only had a single wing, it still intercepted the black globe well.

When the widely scattered ice spears touched the globe, the black smoke was dispersed grandly with a “Puff” sound.

“GRURURU…”

Did it get cautious over the black smoke covering its surroundings? The Gryphon raised its voice and growled. Without a slight break, a strong wind swept along with a wind noise.

From Shin’s point of view, it seemed that the Gryphon had spread its wing and caused the wind. However, the black smoke generated by the smoke bomb was not affected by the wind. So

no matter how much the Gryphon flapped its wing, the black smoke didn't clear up.

"KyUIII!"

The Gryphon cried as it got irritated.

The black smoke of 【Smoke Bomb】 could obstruct both the sense of smell and sight. So it seemed both were effective. It obviously lost sight of Shin and Rionne as the ice spears were shot in the wrong directions.

Shin fended off the flying ice spears occasionally, and joined with Rionne in the shade of a building. After making sure the wall wouldn't easily be broken thanks to its thickness, he checked on Rionne's condition.

"Are you okay?"

"Yeah, my hands are a bit numb, but I'm all right. But I'm sorry, my attacks don't seem to deal effective damage to that guy."

During neither the first nor the second time, Rionne's attacks couldn't deal proper damage to the Gryphon.

Power was achieved with skill, so the Gryphon probably had greater defensive power than the combination of Rionne's STR and 『Muspelm』's attack power.

"Since I came here, I haven't been anything other than a burden."

Rionne put power in her hands gripping the hilt of 『Muspelm』, which touched the ground and made a clattering sound.

Shin then revealed one of his cards to Rionne whose face distorted in frustration.

“It’s also possible to increase the physical ability by 「Enchant」, but what will you do?”

“…Please do. When I’m aimed at by that guy, I’d like to make sure that it won’t interfere with you, Shin.”

Rionne hesitated slightly, but relaxed her shoulders and lowered her head.

“I’ll raise your physical strength and robustness. Please be careful as sensation related to muscle strength can change significantly. Here I go, 「Enchant • Double Strike」!”

After adding a cautionary note concerning the rise in ability, Shin activated 「Enchant」.

A silver light shone over Rionne’s head, and faded out after it covered her body for a moment. This was the effect when an ability is more than doubled.

“…I feel light”

In the state resulting from「Enchant」, Rionne lifted 『Muspelm』 and said so.

The enormous metal 『Muspelm』 felt like a twig.

“I think you should have realized it, but you cannot treat a weapon the usual way when in a strengthened state. The swing speed is too fast and causes a gap in self-image and senses.

Therefore, when trying to strike down a long-distance attack of an enemy, swinging to the sky happens quite often.”

[Enchant] was very excellent in battle. However, it was a type of skill that only applied to the player, and not the weapon, such that there was an adverse effect.

In the game era, there were two things which caused numerous accidents.

First was as Shin said; because of a shift in timing, neither attack nor defense could be performed satisfactorily. Second, one couldn’t stop at the place they thought when their AGI raised, and self-destruct by crashing into a monster.

Also in the game era, if [Enchant] was applied in an unfamiliar state, it was said that it was better not to apply anything when it came to fighting power.

The reason why Shin hadn’t suggested this when they came to Kalkia, was because such risks were taken into account.

Though the rate of increase of the stats depended on the value of the conjurer’s INT, it was Shin who applied [Enchant] to Rionne. The effect wasn’t ordinary.

Nevertheless, Shin has yet to acquire the ability which let him adjust [Enchant]’s rate of increase, Naturally he didn’t have the time to train and master it in Kalkia.

“Now you can dodge the ice spears as much as possible, probably using『Muspelm』as a shield. Don’t try to strike it down unskillfully.”

Shin didn’t forget to remind her a couple more times, so she wouldn’t do anything incompetent.

If she focused only on defense, there would be fewer odd mistakes, too.

“Indeed, this is great. It’s like holding『Muspelm』like a wooden sword. I may get intoxicated with this feeling of omnipotence.”

While swinging『Muspelm』up and down, Rionne said with an eager expression.

Even Shin understood that she would charge recklessly if he didn’t give her a warning.

Part 2.

“KyUAAAAAA!”

At the same time as Rionne muttered, the Gryphon’s cry echoed.

Shin was ‘waiting and watching’ in the shadow of a building when the Gryphon released its breath in every direction, trying to cover its surroundings with ice.

“Oi oi, it’s recovering.”

Other than the buildings covered with ice, Shin also saw the left half of the Gryphon’s body.

The left half of its body, which was previously burnt by the [Flare Burst]that Shin had thrown, was already considerably recovered. Though it was not fully healed yet, its wing had almost restored to about 70% of its former shape.

The HP that Shin had greatly reduced was mostly restored, too. The current Gryphon's HP was about 90% of complete recovery.

"It's too fast, even for self-recovery!"

Hearing Rionne's words, Shin looked closely at the wing.

"That's regeneration rather than recovery. The melted wing is sucking in the blue steam and is restoring to how it was previously!"

The steam, without leaking out of the Gryphon's wounds, had gathered on the tip of the wing that hadn't finish regenerating.

Was it regenerating by gathering the steam? Though it wasn't conclusive whether it hastened the regeneration speed, it was certain that the Gryphon would restore completely over time.

"It seems that the steam will disappear soon. Rather than dealing a large amount of damage all at once, it seems better to shave it down little by little."

Shin had no conclusive evidence, but as far as he could tell, the steam that didn't vanish was used for the regeneration of its wing and had gushed out in large amounts from its gaping wound.

Since the wound on the front leg and the body had already recovered, there was no way to tell how those places had regenerated.

“I’ll go to the front. Rionne, you observe the Gryphon’s state; if there’s any change, tell me. Because there’s a possibility that it’s still hiding something, don’t let your guard down. Just be careful.”

“Yeah, there still may be something like the abnormal state from a little while ago. But, Shin, will you be alright alone?”

“You can count on me. It’s not my first time fighting like this.”

They confirmed their course of action and Shin jumped out from the building first.

The effect of the black smoke still remained, as the Gryphon didn’t turn towards Shin.

“Going near it seems bad. I’ll do it from a long distance.”

Shin went around to face its right side where the damage was still being restored, and shot the wind system magic skill [Air Cutter].

A blade of wind flew and cut through the black smoke, and slashed the body of the Gryphon. It wasn’t a deep wound. He had deliberately dropped the power, and intended to make a lot of cuts on the surface of its body.

As for the length of the wound, it was about 20 cemels long. The steam, which spouted out, vanished when it rose by

approximately 30 cemels. This state wasn't really different from the one he saw in the early stages of battle.

"The damage dealt is small. Though the wound itself appears to have steam coming out, its state doesn't seem to have additional decreases to its HP. I need to pay attention to the changes in its body movements and its attacks, huh?"

Shin thought about the countermeasure while observing the state of the Gryphon.

For caution's sake, he didn't forget to prepare the cure, so that it was usable anytime.

"Next, I'll go head on."

The Gryphon spread its wings and released the ice spears.

Even though the wing had not fully recovered, it was not inferior even when compared with the time it was in a perfect state. Among the widely scattered ice spears, Shin accurately struck down only on those whose trajectory pointed toward himself while advancing.

"KyUAAAAAA!"

Then, a breath of ice approached.

However, as the ice breath had a small range and slower speed than the ice spears, it couldn't catch up to Shin's speed. The ice spears that were shot in order to not interfere with the ice breath, were no longer functioned as the primary artillery

barrage, and for Shin, it wasn't difficult to break through the barrage of ice which had become weak.

"Yo, how's the condition of your body?"

The Gryphon, which concluded that there was no effect from the breath, answered Shin's remark with a blow of ice talons.

If one looked closely, the ice talons which extended from the Gryphon's foreleg became one size bigger than before.

"It is reinforced each time it regenerate, huh?"

The ice talons which crashed onto『Kakura』, shattered like the last time.

However Shin felt that even the size of the shattered ice seemed to have increased. It was likely that its strength went up, too. Though it was natural, the ice spears which transformed from the shattered pieces were just as big as the huge pieces.

By going around to the back, Shin made the Gryphon's huge figure a shield, causing the ice spears to fly over him.

"Kyiiiiiiiiii!!"

However, the Gryphon also kicked the ground with its hind legs and tried to maintain the line of fire by hovering with its wings.

"That's a poor move."

Though the Gryphon displayed a nimbleness which didn't match its gigantic figure, it was in the line of fire of its own ice spears. Guaranteed to hit the Gryphon, it received a huge damage.

In addition, when considering their physical differences, it was like showing its belly to Shin as the Gryphon flew and floated in the air. It could be said to be a heaven-sent opportunity to drive in a single blow, although there was no guarantee that the belly was soft like an ordinary creature's.

"Hoo——"

Without overlooking the little opening, Shin, who wielded 『Kakura』, jumped at the bosom without holding back.

From 『Kakura』 that cut up the air, a purple flame burst out.

"——raAAA!!!"

The feathers of the Gryphon were blown away and scattered at the flank of the swung down 『Kakura』, and sank into the skin and inside the meat.

Just like that, the Gryphon's belly caved in and it slammed against the ground with its whole body.

"GIE!!?"

With a giant body more than 5 mels long falling to the ground, an earthquake traveled through the ground.

The sound of buildings, which were about to crumble, collapsed, and arrived at Shin's ears along with the Gryphon's groan.

"Was that about 10% just now?"

Shin confirmed the Gryphon's remaining HP while landing.

Although his stats were restrained and although his weapon was not《Ancient》grade, a single blow directly from Shin had only dealt damage equal to about 10% of its total health. It was an exceptional defensive power for a monster he came across in this world.

The Gryphon didn't continue to expose the gap while lying on the ground. A gaze of precaution was directed at Shin as it immediately kicked the ground and stood up.

"G-GIIII…"

However, there was no power in that gaze. It was because the purple flames were still spreading in the part where Shin struck the single blow.

At this moment, the Gryphon's HP gauge was decreasing little by little. What Shin used was the mallet technique and flame technique combination skill 「Wicked Flame Fall」; it generated a flame which dealt additional damage for a certain period of time when an attack hit.

Was it because the Gryphon was clad in ice that it was weak to the fire? The Gryphon made a groan like sound. It was going to let the flame induced wound freeze, but the power of the flame was strong and continued to burn its body.

"That one blow is effective, huh?"

It didn't seem to be able to recover the internal damage, as there was no steam gushing out that it could suck into its belly. It didn't recover the HP which continued to decrease.

As for Shin, who judged that dealing damage by blows was more appealing, he once again thrust from the front.

Though the Gryphon came to intercept him immediately, the accuracy of its attack had declined, probably because of the flames burning in its stomach.

Shin slipped through the weakly aimed barrage, eluded the talons, and hammered『Kakura』on the places where it wasn't covered in ice, such as the Gryphon's body or its neck, etc. Along with its decreased HP, the movements of the Gryphon became duller.

Then, that moment came around. The accumulated damage had reached its feet. The Gryphon had raised its ice talons toward Shin, but its hind leg that was on the ground suddenly lost power.

The Gryphon which swung up its foreleg, couldn't recover from its collapsing posture. Shin didn't miss that fatal opening.

"Sorry but I can't afford to miss here."

The one who got attacked was the Gryphon. The one who tried to hunt was being hunted, it was the way of the world.

Shin kicked the ground and jumped up, a bluish-white sphere appearing on his right palm. This was the flame technique system magic skill which had burnt half of the Gryphon's body; [Flare Burst]'s sphere, before the heat ray was discharged.

Shin then pushed the sphere onto the falling Gryphon's head.

“Can you withstand this at zero distance?”

As soon as Shin finished speaking, a heat ray was discharged from the sphere.

Against the mighty amount of heat emitted from point blank, the Gryphon had no way to defend. The heat ray which charged straight, melted the Gryphon’s head as it went through the body in the line of fire, and melted the ground.

The body of the Gryphon, whose head had vanished, fell down to the ground as it lost power. The HP which was displayed was 0 without a doubt.

From its body where the heat ray penetrated its head, and other wounds as well, a mix of blue and green liquid flowed out.

“Is it over?”

As Shin landed on the ground, he was wary of the surroundings next to the Gryphon’s corpse.

He felt only Rionne’s presence.

“Shin! You did it!”

Rionne, who had been hiding, came running up. She called out to Shin, after confirming the Gryphon had ceased to breathe.

“It’s possible to go outside now with this, huh?”

“Worst case, even if we can’t go out from the side entrance, we can use the means to open the gate.”

“Will that be alright? It’s possible for the outside monsters to come in.”

“The side entrance here is somehow connected to the room with the gate opening and shutting device. Besides, it has a width to the extent where a carriage can pass through when the gate is open, and it also closes after several minutes. Even if there are monsters outside, if it’s you and I, it’s possible to escape as soon as we defeat them.”

After verifying the detailed operation and time taken, etc, when it seemed to be no problem, Shin also agreed with Rionne’s opinion.

However, at that time when the two people began to walk, a change happened.

◆◆◆◆

“What?”

It was Shin who noticed it first. When he turned around, on the periphery of the body, fluid was flowing out of the Gryphon, blue steam was generated.

“The monster’s body fluid?”

“I think it’s the steam coming out from the wounds simultaneously with the body fluids…although I have a bad feeling.”

Almost at the same time when Shin said that, the steam converged mid-air and a familiar silhouette was formed.

In just a few seconds, there was a figure of Gryphon which was exactly the same as several minutes before in front of Shin and Rionne.

“KyuAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA!”

A roar together accompanied by ice spears assaulted the two people.

Shin and Rionne resisted it, and escaped to shelter for a moment.

“…Now then, what will you do? It has resurrected!”

“Yeah. What I think is, it has a separate main body, and the rest was created by magic.”

“Hmm, what do you mean?”

“There is another main body, it means that the Gryphon is a puppet or something, and another monster or conjurer manipulates it. As the monster is created by magic, it’s the technique to engrave on something, but it feel like the revival and the reconstruction of the monster was done automatically. It’s good if the main body is defeated. Also, in case it was engraved with magic, it’s settled when the magic formation or the catalyst is destroyed. Given the circumstances that emerged, I think it’s the latter, but…”

As far as Shin knew, there were several skills to summon a monster.

However, in this case, it was different from the monster partner of tamer and monster summon of summoner. It was also not the doll summons of exorcist's magic and puppeteering.

The monster was created by magic —— it appeared to be the closest method he could think of. Normally it was often used as a trap in dungeons.

"Then, there is a method that became the key somewhere in this Sacred Place?"

"Maybe. Because it is usually close to the emerging monster, finding it should not be so difficult. It's suspicious…it's over there as I thought."

While Shin slightly peeked out from under cover, he pointed toward the wall.

"The side entrance? Near the place where the opening and shutting device for the gate is, could there be something that would make such a monster appear, Shin?"

"That Gryphon, I think it prevents us from going outside Sacred Place. Because it holds a position in front of the gate, we cannot get close to the side entrance either. But it doesn't mean there is no other choice, it's the most suspicious at the moment."

Given that the Gryphon had attacked regardless of the place, there shouldn't be such a thing in a building where it would mistakenly bombard the surrounding area.

“I’ll become a decoy again. Rionne, you enter the side entrance in the meantime and use this item to inspect things. It reacts when there is a magic formation nearby. Here, this is for defensive use when you’re in a pinch.”

Shin said while materializing 2 items in his pocket, and handed them over to Rionne.

Both items were necklace-shaped items, so it would never get in the way of action.

“I have a feeling that these are superb items again…I’ll not ask about it now. I don’t worry because it’s you, Shin. Just don’t act too recklessly.”

Shin nodded at Rionne’s words, and jumped out ahead into the Gryphon’s line of sight.

“I’m here!”

He raised his voice on purpose to notify his presence.

The ice spears came flying instantaneously, but they were brushed off by『Kakura』as he approached the Gryphon.

After confirming that the Gryphon’s attention was directed at Shin, Rionne also started to run.

“It could stand a blow of Limit II. Unless I go further, it’s unlikely for me to beat it down.”

After seeing that Rionne went into the side entrance, Shin released his limit.

He couldn't predict the impact on the surroundings due to having the biggest offensive power. However, in front of the Gryphon, he couldn't do an instant kill, at least not with his former stats.

Then at this chance, he decided to use it as a subject for an experiment.

Swish!

Shin jumped off the ground and shortened the distance to the Gryphon.

To Shin, who was coming at a speed that couldn't be compared to up until now, the Gryphon was not able to react.

Since he was faster than the ice spears that were shot, the『Kakura』wielded by Shin reached the Gryphon's neck. Previously, the strike was obstructed by the Gryphon's feathers and skin, and even if『Kakura』only dealt the damage due to a blow, it was different this time.

The blade part of『Kakura』broke through the defensive power of the Gryphon and gouged out the meat while the blade creaked under the power exerted.

Right after Shin passed by next to the Gryphon, the neck of the Gryphon rolled onto the ground after a gap of several seconds.

It was so quick that less than a second had passed from the moment he closed the distance while wielding『Kakura』until the Gryphon's neck was sliced. If there was an expression on the

Gryphon, it would have said “I don’t understand what happened”.

However, the body which fell down and the neck which rolled onto the ground turned into blue and green steam before long, furthermore, it was revived in a perfect state in several seconds.

“Until Rionne finds something, shall we have test of who can hold out the longest?”

The distance between Shin and the Gryphon was almost 0.

He knew that it had restored. There was no way he didn’t anticipate such a presage.

Shin mercilessly beat the resurrected Gryphon with『Kakura』. Once again, its neck dropped, its body was cut in two, and burnt down with magic.

The Gryphon was simply a target to the current Shin. Like a carp on top of a cutting board, it was merely plain food preparation.

“GhuI!!”

“Too bad”

The Gryphon’s struggle was futile, as its ice spears were dodged, smashed, and『Kakura』was swung down in return. The kill count exceeded 10, 20, and piled up to 30, but the Gryphon hadn’t weakened.

“What’s the deal with it?”

The result was the same either magic or physical.

Shin couldn't think of anything but to confine it afterward.

"KYUAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA!!"

The Gryphon cried, it was conspicuously high.

Soon after that, the dragged sense Shin felt at the central part of the Sacred Place enveloped his whole body.

"What again!?"

Come to think of it, it was likely that this Gryphon was connected to the haze at the central part. It didn't seem to be his imagination after all.

Shin unleashed a magic skill while going against the drawing force, but all too soon, he was drawn in by a white sphere which appeared on the joint part of the Gryphon's neck. Though it was possible to shatter it with『Kakura』, the force becomes irresistible when approached and disappears in the same way of approaching magic. (T/N: He basically can't destroy the sphere, as it won't let him. It disappear when one get close and there is force of attraction towards it.)

The suction force gradually became stronger, and Shin's shoes began to scrape the ground.

Shin made up his mind to attack the sphere, whether he had choice or not. For better or for worse, that happened.

"What the heck is this…"

A golden shine began to escape from Shin's body.

That light reminded him of the last boss in the death game, Origin's [Golden Wave].

"KYUUUII!!"

In response to the golden lights appearance, the Gryphon groaned. As if it was cautious of the light.

"The drawn feeling faded away, huh?"

Before he knew it, the sense that pulled him toward the center was gone.

While Shin carefully observed the Gryphon, he also devoted some of his attention to the light leaking from his own body. When he attempted to move it using same way he handled magic power, the light surprisingly obeyed Shin's intention without a hitch.

The golden light gathered at 『Kakura』, and it turned into a golden blade.

"…Shall I try it?"

Shin muttered while he ran.

He was at point-blank range to begin with, so the distance with the Gryphon was closed in an instant, and the swung 『Kakura』 left a golden trace.

"KyuA!?"

The Gryphon also tried to avoid with its very best effort, but its left foreleg flew without it being able to evade.

“KYIIIIIII!!?”

“This is, it went well, huh?”

From the joint of the foot which Shin blew away, the blue steam didn’t come out.

As for the left foreleg which was blown off, it had disappeared as it dissolved in mid-air.

The Gryphon fired ice spears aiming at Shin, and tried to keep distance. It was not possible to read its facial expression, but that was indeed the flustered expression of the Gryphon.

If the advantage of overwhelming regenerative ability was lost, it was a natural reaction to have, because the difference between their combat strength was obvious.

“I don’t understand it well, but I’m grateful!”

Shin corrected his posture with『Kakura』, and took aim at the Gryphon.

“KYUU…KYUA!”

In an instant when the Gryphon was aware of Shin who had the shining『Kakura』, it donned an armor of ice on its whole body.

As for the lost left foreleg, it was compensated with an artificial limb made of ice. Its talons were enlarged further, each one seemed to be a sharp sword. Its body also became one size bigger

by having ice enveloped to its whole body, and a feeling of coercion increased too. A thin blue aura emitted from the armor of ice.

“KYUAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA!!”

“Is that your full power? Bring it on!!”

Shin also screamed back at the roar filled with thirst for blood.

It was the Gryphon that took the first move. Its flying speed, formation speed, and ice spears which was shot by its wings became remarkably fast.

In the barrage of ice which tried to bury the surroundings, Shin answered by waving『Kakura』.

With enhanced dynamic vision, Shin firmly perceived the ice spears coming toward him. His arm which wielded『Kakura』, responded to Shin’s consciousness without any delay.

A golden blur intercepted the blue and green barrage. More than 10 of the ice spears were shattered by one swing of『Kakura』.

A storm of raining ice spears and hail was not allowed to advance before the impregnable defence formed by the golden blur.

“KyUA!”

However, the ice spears were only for stalling. The enemy’s favorite was the breath which came later.

The breath unleashed from the Gryphon’s mouth went directly toward Shin. Its thickness was twice the previous; it became

approximately 80 cemels thick. The breath sped straight through the air like a blue laser, and Shin caught it head-on.

『Kakura』which swung downward straight from the upper position, thrust into the center of the breath. The breath then split into 2 directions with the contact portion of『Kakura』as the base point. And then the breath ran along Shin's left and right, and the swallowed up nearby ice spears were frozen over. In the twinkling of an eye, anything that wasn't behind Shin was covered in ice.

"I was preoccupied by the front that I've become negligent of other things."

"GHUA!?"

That Gryphon screamed almost at the same time as Shin's remark.

Several explosions were heard; the force of the breath weakened, and the number of ice spears decreased too. Emerging from the opening『Kakura』made by scattering the breath, the figure of the Gryphon with the back part of its ice armor split open.

Shin, who had activated flying magic skill while facing the breath, had attacked from the Gryphon's overhead. The explosive sounds were the result of using a skill of the flame technique system. It seemed that the damage reached not only the armor but also the inside, as the breath ceased after a few second as well.

With less ice spears, there would no longer be any obstacle for Shin. Against Shin who closed the distance instantaneously, the Gryphon answered with talons of its foreleg.

The fact that it couldn't even react some time ago was hard to believe, as its eyes managed to track Shin's movements. Earlier at the beginning, its left talons were swung out a beat late.

The shining talons which basked under the sun, appeared to flaunt their sharpness.

Swish!

To match the right talons, Shin raised『Kakura』.

The moment they struck each other, the repelled right foreleg of the Gryphon flew into the air. With the momentum of the raised『Kakura』just now, Shin rotated sideways on the spot. The raised『Kakura』struck against the left ice foreleg which approached too late.

In front of the Gryphon,『Kakura』drew a golden arc. Its left ice foot, which couldn't withstand the power of『Kakura』, flew into the air like its right foreleg.

"I got y——huh!?"

Just as Shin went directly to take its neck, a strike entered from the upper left sky.

He immediately repelled it with『Kakura』, and glanced at the things that attacked him.

"That a Gryphon's tail huh? But I suppose it should be quieter…"

What was swaying from side to side in the air was the Gryphon's tail which didn't have a presence until now.

It was covered in ice and had its length extended, it had become like a whip.

With an armor worn on its whole body, the number of weapons seemed to have increased too.

"But it's futile!"

If the secret was broken, coping was possible.

It was said that the tip of a common whip could surpass the speed of sound, but the Gryphon's tail was even faster. However, it was not a speed that Shin couldn't react to.

He was only surprised to see an attack from an unexpected direction upon receiving it. The trajectory of the tail flying on a wall, along with the huge figure of the Gryphon, had been supplemented by his 〔Mind's Eyes〕.

Shin matched its timing, and flung 『Kakura』 against the flying ice tail. As the strength of the tail was low, it was easily cut.

"…It has quick recovery, huh?"

Shin expressed his discouraged grumble.

Because in front of Shin, the tail was restored in but a moment. It was probably because the part he sliced off was not a living body.

And then both of its forelegs were reconstructed with ice too.

"As expected, I have no choice but to slice its neck."

As soon as Shin said so, he invoked a magic skill.

The golden light which covered『Kakura』, fused with a crimson red light. At the same time, above the sky, a flame technique system magic skill【Red Tomahawk】was fired onto the Gryphon's rear. An arc was drawn in the sky, as Shin began to aim the flame bullets to rain at the Gryphon.

While attacking Shin with its tail, the Gryphon back stepped with an agility that belied its gigantic figure. It spread its wings and fired ice spears at the sky, while sending forth a breath.

"What a clever guy!"

The Gryphon which dealt with simultaneous attacks from the sky and the land, was praised by Shin. That was simply because it was the composure of the strong.

In reality, the Gryphon was not able to completely prevent his attack. The flame bullets plowed through while erasing the storm of ice spears. Though several blew up on the way, the remainder were rained down on the Gryphon.

"GHUII!?"

A scream leak from the Gryphon's mouth. Its tail strike and breath were interrupted.

"This time I won't miss!!"

The ground was crushed as Shin stepped on it.

『Kakura』which went into motion, cast more light.

A mallet technique and flame technique combination skill 〔Flame Net Charge〕.

『Kakura』was struck against the base of the Gryphon's neck.

The armor of ice evaporated after touching『Kakura』, and the Gryphon's body along its trajectory was burnt off.

Along the slashing mark, a red line was carved on the Gryphon's body.

"See you"

After leaving a parting word, Shin distanced himself immediately.

In the next moment, intense light emitted from the red line carved on the Gryphon, and exploded.

〔Flame Net Charge〕was originally used for blunt weapons such as hammers and so on to crush the opponent, it was a skill to blow up the opponent as well as the ground.

Since『Kakura』was thin this time, it resulted in an explosion along the line.

"Was it done?"

Shin confirmed that the golden light was also mixed in the explosion.

When that was considered, the effect of the golden light should have been carried on with the effect of the skill. When the explosive flame cleared up, the figure of the Gryphon was nowhere to be seen.

The remains of the Gryphon which turned into pieces, were scattered everywhere.

When he looked at the state for a while, the remains collapsed and vanished like sand. There was nothing left behind. Even the light emitted from Shin's body disappeared after the Gryphon exploded.

Part 3.

“What the heck was that?…”

When Shin breathed out a sigh of fatigue, he heard a *Ga-thunk* sound from the gate.

When he turned his gaze toward the sound, a heavy gate was slowly opening.

“Shin! Are you alright!?”

From the direction of the voice, Rionne was running from the side entrance.

It seemed like she managed to open the gate safely.

“I’m okay, Rionne. I defeated the Gryphon somehow. What was that?”

“Ah, I heard an explosive sound, so I thought you had used a trump card. I was thinking about trying to escape as soon as the Gryphon was temporarily incapacitated.”

The monsters in the Sacred Place didn’t go outside. She seemed to have intended to utilize that rule.

Since the Gryphon was an unknown monster, it may have chased them later on, but she judged that it was possible to push it back with 2 people. There was also a possibility that the Gryphon couldn’t pass through the slightly opened gate with its gigantic body.

“Because it’s you, Shin, although I also felt that you could defeat it…It seem I was right.”

“More than anything, I seem to be able to live up to expectations. Now, let’s hurry up before the gate closes.”

Shin urged Rionne and moved to the outside of the gate.

Thereupon, Shin and Rionne went outside and walked on the road a little, and exactly as Rionne said, the gate closed automatically. When Shin shifted his eyes toward the sky, the magic barrier which enveloped the Sacred Place also deactivated.

What had happened? Shin didn’t understand it.

However, he made up his mind to remember this event well, and looked back at Rionne. He smiled with an expression as gentle as possible. Because she may be worried if he still had a serious face.

“It was a successful escape.”

“Yeah, for the time being, rather than being inside, it should be much safer.”

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While being cautious of the surroundings, the two people were still not as tense as they were inside Kalkia.

“Let’s run from here on out. Both of us are upper class Chosen Ones. Rather than looking for a village to procure a horse, running by ourselves is better and we can arrive faster.”

“Yeah, I have no objection. Balmel is at the eastside of the Melt Mountains, so if we run while making the mountains into landmarks, we should be fine.”

Balmel was a fort city that was built in order to respond when the monsters overflowed from Kalkia. It faced both the sea and mountains, and seemed to be a convenient place to live if only there was no mass monster outbreak.

Since there was also the promise with Schnee, he decided to go toward Balmel as Rionne said. They ran at a speed that would leave horses behind.

After 15 minutes of running while ignoring the monsters which were seen occasionally, Shin perceived an abnormal number of monsters’ presences in his sensing range.

“…Hey Rionne, is Balmel further ahead?”

“Yes, is there something wrong?”

“There are large amount of monsters ahead, is that alright?”

Rionne, who heard the information which Shin perceived, made a stiffened expression all of a sudden.

“Don’t tell me, the ‘Flood’ is happening!?”

“‘Flood’?”

“Around the Sacred Place, the demon essence accumulates, which overflows from the Sacred Place. Though it doesn’t have

influence on the human body, when the demon essence gathers to a certain amount, all of it manifests into monsters and is unleashed into the surroundings. We call that the 'Flood'."

Shin, by chance, had previously read about the description of the phenomenon in the library of Bayreuth.

In the content written in the book, it was a story of emergence of the low-level monsters. However no matter how much he looked, the number of monsters would cause numerous resources to be destroyed.

"If the end of the monster line is still here, the front may not arrive at Balmel immediately. I'll overtake it and support Balmel."

"Roger. As expected, in this situation, you won't just leave them alone, Shin."

A commoner would have simply run away, but unfortunately, these two people were far from commoners.

Balmel wouldn't fall easily; there would be enough countermeasures as it was the only purpose of the town. However the scale of the 'Flood' was not fixed, 'there's no knowing what may happen', was also written.

It was not a thing he could ignore when he heard about it; that's the character of the man called Shin.

"It seems going home will take longer."

The running Rionne, who took a detour to chase after the group of monsters, Shin also raised his pace of running.

After a little while, a huge group of monsters were confirmed by sight.

In every 'Flood', there seemed to be a trend in the emerging monsters. This time it was humanoid monsters, such as goblins and orcs that became the majority.

Was it a blessing of God? Compared to the high physical ability beast type and the tirelessly golem type, their pace was considerably slow. However, the large crowd of monsters was certainly headed to Balmel.

"Hmm? Hey Rionne, there's smoke rising over there, do you know what it is?"

At the right front of the running Shin, a big cloud of smoke that appeared suddenly was visible.

When he listened carefully, explosive sounds were audible, too. Apparently, there was something going on in the vicinity of the boundary between the forest in the plain and the Melt Mountains.

"Perhaps, the Mist Garuda have descended the mountains. Melt Mountains is in the territory of the Mist Garuda after all. When the monsters that were born, in the 'Flood', were about to enter

the mountains, I heard they were reduced to ashes. That's why the monsters have no choice but to advance toward Balmel."

The Mist Garuda may not have had the intention, but they seemed to have become the figure that guided the monsters toward Balmel in a good way.

On top of that, since it killed the monsters which trespassed on the mountains, it had reduced the numbers that reached Balmel. Therefore, it was said that the act of trying to hunt the Mist Garuda in Melt Mountains was prohibited in a treaty. Because it reduced the damage of the 'Flood', it was outrageous to fight against each other.

"That's the Mist Garuda, huh?"

A big shadow flying in the sky was reflected in Shin's eyes as he ran while watching the mountains.

The Mist Garuda was flying leisurely while leaving an arc like a vapour trail. The mist was shaped like a bird, as shown in its name, and its level was high, ranged between 700 – 800. It had a lot of special attacks, and was a very powerful monster.

"Oh, that is.."

From the Mist Garuda which was dancing in the sky, a red mist was sprayed.

The goblins and ogres started to roll over with their whole bodies covered in flames the moment the mist touched them.

It was one of the special attacks of the Mist Garuda, 'Fog of Flare'.

If you didn't have resistance to a certain level of flame attribute, you could receive an abnormal status where your HP decreased by 10% per second and die in 10 seconds. It was even said that the setting in the game may be wrong, as it was the fog of death that burnt many players to death, although it was the monsters being roasted this time.

"Anyway, why is it that the monsters still go in even though they know they are going to be burned?"

Shin thought of such things, looking at the monsters which kept on diving into their own death.

"The monsters that emerge from the 'Flood' tend to have significantly lower intelligence. That's why they charge until the last one standing."

Indeed. The monsters which were born from the 'Flood', seemed to be different from ordinary monsters.

While wishing that the Mist Garuda burned the monsters as much as possible, Shin and Rionne decided to leave from that place.

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Shin and Rionne ran on the plain as they overtook the group of monsters which were previously ahead of them and became a black wave.

The map which was projected onto Shin's view when he passed the group of monsters, displayed only a bright red marker without any gap where the monsters were. It was too crowded, and the distinction of the individual was difficult, too.

"Is it always such a large crowd?"

"Maybe. I think there are various kinds of scales in the 'Flood', but I don't remember it. The number of monsters were a bit more than when I participated in the battle once. It would be nice if there were fewer to be considered…"

Rionne probed into her memories while remembering the scene from that time.

What Rionne talked about for a while was the story where she merely drove a sword into the emerged monsters, and repeatedly killed them. This 'Flood' felt larger in scale than the one at that time, Rionne added at the end.

Even if Rionne knew strong soldiers were there to protect Balmel, her feet naturally increased the speed.

"I understand your feelings, but you're pushing too much, Rionne."

Seeing Rionne who had shortness of breath, Shin called for a break.

No matter how much an upper class Chosen One Rionne was, her stamina was not unlimited. Before arriving at Balmel, there's no meaning if she got completely exhausted and couldn't move.

“Let’s take a break for a moment on top of that hill. We already passed the leading group of the monster too. Rest for a little bit.”

“But! …Well, sorry, you’re right, Shin.”

Rionne was probably trying to say that she still can go on, but she noticed her own state as well.

If this goes on as it is, she would run out of energy in the middle of the way. Since they kept running at a high speed, the monsters’ group was already quite far behind. Even if Shin and Rionne arrived at Balmel, several days could be expected to pass before the monsters reached them.

Considering their pace, it was reasonable to rest here, because there was still a distance to cover to get to Balmel.

“It’s called a fort city so haven’t they already repelled the enemy many times over?”

While they were on break, Shin asked about Balmel.

If it’s a city built for ‘Flood’ control, a military unit with reasonable equipment should exist.

“It is indeed, but it won’t finish without a small number of sacrifices. Moreover now, among 3 upper class Chosen Ones who should protect Balmel, one is absent.”

“Is it okay to be absent as the main part of defense?”

“It seemed there was something at the church, that he had to guard a certain person. Geez, what is the church thinking about?”

Rionne frowned as she couldn't understand it.

The fort city according to Rionne, apart from being the 'Flood' breakwater, had received a dispatched upper-class Chosen Ones from the church and the neighboring countries. Because the fort city was inferior in terms of numbers, it was a strategy to compensate with quality.

However this time, since the church has stimulated a talk about pulling out a Chosen One at their own discretion, objections flooded from various countries.

(The church, huh?…Is it by any chance, that guy?)

Hearing "Church" and "A certain person", a figure of a knight who damaged his wagon during the journey to Falnido came to Shin's mind.

In this world, it was quite common that the actual status differ from the height of a level. However, a high-leveled person was still limited. The knights at that time, especially the man who destroyed the wheels of the wagon was level 239. It was higher than the present Rionne.

It was no more than a possible story, but if it's the truth, it would be necessary to add restraints to the priest who threatened the knights.

"What about the other two? Will they able to pull through somehow?"

“The combination is not bad. The other two are a magic swordsman like me and a mage. If they cooperate with the high-leveled adventurers who are in Balmel, they would never lose as long as there is no accident. The problem is the number of victims.”

“How far could the enemy be reduced by magic skills of the mage, was the key”, Rionne murmured, and drank water.

Even though how much the mage was called a Chosen One, a skill couldn’t be released forever.

Though it depended on ability and skill, there was also a limit in range a person could cover.

“How is the fighting force of Balmel? There are Chosen Ones from the adventurers’ guild, right?”

“Indeed apart from the dispatched people, there are powerful people who are close to an upper-class Chosen Ones. But most of them are melee type. Only few people who can attack a wide area.”

It was alright if the monsters were in small number, but when it comes to several hundreds of thousands, defeat would happen in the long run. Since the monsters appearing in the ‘Flood’ were low-level, even with a general soldier it can help to keep it occupied.

Though the course to go over there was changed, Shin decided to contact Schnee just in case.

(“This is Shin, is it alright to talk now?”)

(“Yes, did something happen?”)

After making sure there was no problem to communicate, Shin told the ‘Flood’ things to Schnee.

(“I can’t say anything about the scale unless I see them myself. It it’s the normal scale, we don’t have to worry about Balmel at least.”)

Schnee judged calmly after she listened to Shin’s story.

However, there was an irregular this time.

(“Have you taken that 1 Chosen One’s absence into account?”)

(“If the Chosen One who is not there is not a mage, it would be all right. Since the monster itself can be dealt with just Balmel’s forces.”)

“Although I have not considered the victims”, Schnee continued.

(“I got it. I’m going to rush up to Balmel from here, you should hurry as much as possible there, too.”)

(“Understood.”)

With Schnee there, it should not be a problem without the Chosen One and so forth.

Though Tiera was not able to move so quickly, she would not be late if Kagerou’s with her.

“…Now then, we’ve had enough rest. Let’s move soon, Shin.”

Thanks to having rested for a while, Rionne seemed to have recovered, as she stood up swiftly.

The talk with Schnee had just ended too, so Shin also stood up at the same time.

“Okay, but I’ll carry that.”

Saying so, Shin carried『Muspelm』which was placed on the ground to his back.

It wasn’t much burden to Shin due to the height of his physical strength, he determined that it would be hard for Rionne to carry it and run for a long time.

“Mu! I can carry my own weapon——”

“Rather than fussing over that now, it’s more important to move quickly. You were worn out halfway, you know?”

“Ugh, when that’s said, I cannot talk back…”

Since that was the reason they took a break, Rionne couldn’t argue.

The top priority here was to proceed ahead, and the『Muspelm』was entrusted to Shin.

“Mumumu!”

“Why are you groaning?”

“We have to hurry up, must to but…damn, I’m ashamed to be tired out at this amount.”

“You unexpectedly hate to lose, huh”

Although they were talking, their running speed has not dropped.

Rionne’s burden of『Muspelm』has diminished a lot, she can afford to talk as a result.

◆◆◆◆

They kept running most of the day, and finished preparation for camping before the sun set.

As one would expect, to keep running for days without sleeping was difficult no matter how much the stamina, so they decided to get enough sleep in a simple tent they set together and stood watch by turn.

After finishing a quick meal, and Shin cleaning up, Rionne began to speak. She casually approached Shin and sent a flirtatious glance.

“You really have a lot of stuff that comes up. Even if I am prepared, isn’t this thoroughly prepared?”

“I was prepared for a journey to begin with. Because I was summoned there, these are the only things I have. Once you convert them into cards, it’s not very bulky.”

“It’s because you can use item cards, huh? I wish my country had a person with that ability.”

In the story Shin asked Wilhelm, there should be a possibility that Rionne and other countries’ Chosen Ones possessed an Item Box if they had items.

“I will not talk about cooperation.”

Shin didn’t know the detailed information, and either way he wouldn’t do it.

“No good?”

“No good.”

“No matter what?”

“Never. Hey! don’t come closer!”

He distanced himself from the leaning forward Rionne who approached him.

Around the area that emphasized her chest, ‘She’s actually aware of her own charm, isn’t she?’, Shin thought. How did the princess’s manners and so forth have fallen? He wanted to ask.

In the darkness of night, Rionne who was illuminated by the bonfire, the lively state she had during the day quieted down, and wore an atmosphere that seemed to be slightly strange.

“For you to be somewhat flustered, is this body even attractive?”

“It’s not that I understand what you have been doing. I mean I should say, is this the kind of thing you should be doing in this situation?”

“I thought you’d say ‘It’s useless to even be flustered’, Shin! If that’s the case, I’ll make good use of the time when I don’t have anything to do.”

“Where’s the effective use of time? Where?”

“It’s time effective at least for me. In this way, I can speak to you without reserve.”

While smiling somewhat lonely, Rionne corrected her sitting posture.

“Without reserve, huh? Rionne, well, there will be such a partner, like when you talked with Gadras, I think that was pretty frank though.”

“Gadras is my sword’s mentor. I’m more comfortable with him than other people. Although, there is still something like a wall to royal family. In that respect, you really have no constraint, Shin.”

“That, in other words, am I just being rude?”

“Sometimes I also want to talk with such a partner, who humbles himself all the time, but it doesn’t suit me personally; although I’m accustomed to such things.”

Rionne often went out to towns, but due to bad publicity, even the adventurers who wasn't particular much about social status seemed to humble themselves.

"How about your family? Ah well, you don't have to say it if you don't want to. There seems to be a lot of discord in some places."

"It's not the things I conceal particularly. You're right, our family's interpersonal connections had…been long gone. Although we're not on a bad terms, I don't know whether I want a substitute family."

"It's that kind of royal family, huh? Well, in case you need someone to talk, I'll be your companion. ——Hey! Why are you getting clingy!"

"Sometimes even a princess will want to depend on someone. You may hear my selfishness a little while hearing my story."

'Was she teasing me?', Shin thought, but Rionne never did anything more than cling to Shin's arm.

"I can't show this to the people in the castle."

"Nobody is around. It's been a long time not being monitored everywhere other than in the battlefield."

"Good grief, this princess…only this time."

After a sigh, Shin tossed a branch to the bonfire with his free arm.

It was easy to pull away if he intended to. However, the unhappy speech he listened to was making his intention fade away.

A family was something very important to Shin. Though before the death game, his parents were in good health, and his relationship with his elder brother and younger sister were also good. It was noisy fun, and the place where he should have returned. As he thought to himself, he couldn't help but to feel something in Rionne's circumstances.

The serene expression of Rionne relieving her burden, Shin would like to see it a little longer. Speaking furthermore, there was none of the monitoring that Rionne spoke of. It's mean that Rionne was constantly monitored.

'You probably have time to relax now', Shin thought.

"Shin, you're warm."

"Is it cold?"

"I don't mean that."

'I know', he muttered in his mind, and threw another branch on the fire.

Pop sounds and the noise of branches split open were heard. Shin was not that thickheaded to be mistaken on the meaning of this situation.

Was this the original Rionne? Shin couldn't arrive to a conclusion. Where was her usual spirited mood?

"Sleep soon, we will keep on running tomorrow. Don't reserve the fatigue."

“Muu, it can’t be helped. Or I have to wait for the next opportunity?”

“Vacate such thinking until we pull through completely over the ‘Flood’.”

Shin who put out a mantle, wrapped up Rionne, and warned her for formality’s sake.

Rionne probably would understand that. Somehow, she took a rest well.

The transition to Sacred Place, the defeat against monsters, and the impatience due to the ‘Flood’. When such various factors were put together, the manner until now was expressed, Shin thought.

The deep darkness of the moonless night.

Groups of monsters from behind.

What can be relied upon by fellow travellers, was only a small bonfire.

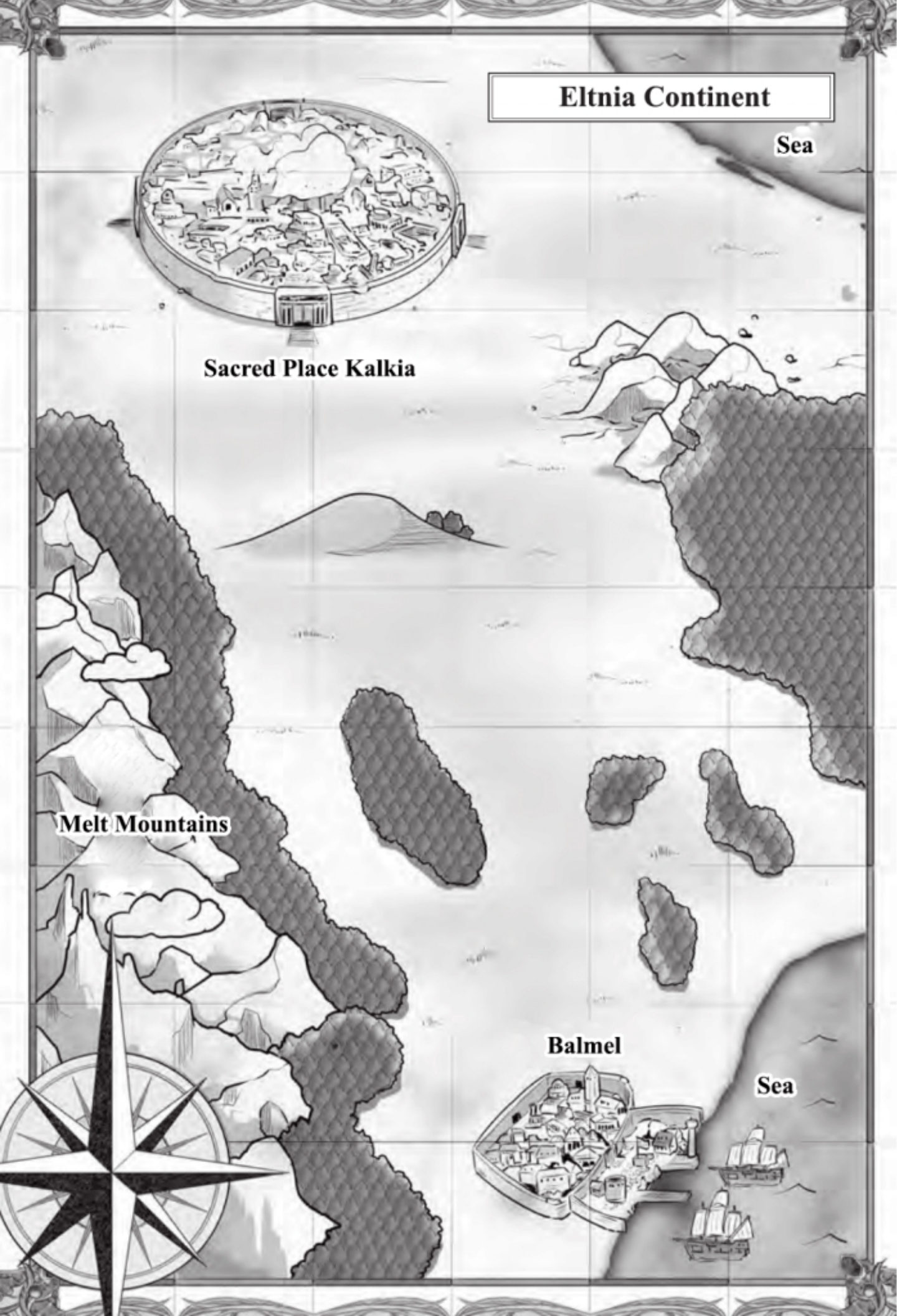
Regardless of the strength of capabilities, it was no wonder that a feeling to seek one who can be relied upon was sought, Shin thought.

Speaking of why he understood it, it was because Shin had experienced similar things.

Shin and Rionne, Schnee and Tiera, Yuzuha and Kagerou were heading toward Balmel.

A great army of monsters exceeding 1000, approaching moment by moment.

In order to fight against the looming threat, everyone would meet at Balmel.


Eltnia Continent
Sea
Sacred Place Kalkia
Melt Mountains
Balmel
Sea